DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

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Should you wear flip-flops to the office?

INSIDE TIMES2

Why I no longer go topless

Carol Midgley

‘Not again’: what wife thought of Burnham’s third shot at No 10

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Andy Burnham’s wife said “not again” and told him that Labour had already rejected him twice when he told her he wanted to make another attempt to reach Downing Street.

The prime minister said that Marie-France van Heel had been surprised when he decided to return to Westminster and challenge Sir Keir Starmer for the Labour leadership, having lost contests in 2010 and 2015.

Burnham told the *How to Fail* podcast: “She was like, ‘What? Not again. They told you twice they don’t want you. Why are you doing it again?’”

He said that his wife had needed convincing because she did not want to watch him suffer another defeat.

Burnham said that Van Heel had always been his bluntest critic. As a young MP, he recalled finishing interviews believing that he had performed well because he had stuck to the party line only to switch on his phone and find a message from her in capitals that read: “Answer the f***ing question.”

However, Burnham said that his failed leadership attempts had helped him to reach No 10 by forcing him to reconsider how he conducted politics.

Burnham also discussed his father Roy’s Alzheimer’s disease and said that staff at his care home had put him in front of a TV as he entered Downing Street. Burnham said that the manager later told him: “He turned and momentarily, they said, ‘We thought he knew’.”

He said that the moment had been moving because he had been embracing his mother outside Downing Street at the time.

Burnham linked his family’s experience to plans for a “radical” overhaul of social care. He said: “We discovered as a family. My mum was sinking under the pressure of trying to make it work when the care system couldn’t make it work for her.”

Borrowing splurge in bid to boost economy

Ministers set to exploit change in fiscal rules

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Ministers are drawing up plans to boost economic growth by exploiting the fiscal rules to raise government borrowing and spend the money on infrastructure, housing and support for businesses.

Under proposals being worked on before the budget, the Treasury intends to provide billions of pounds in new finance.

Officials hope the extra cash, which could also be channelled to regional mayors, will get the economy moving and give the chancellor, John Healey, some good news for the budget.

The move, which could raise more than £9 billion a year for spending by 2031, is made possible by a change to the fiscal rules implemented by Rachel Reeves when she was chancellor.

This allows the government to count spending on infrastructure or equity in companies as assets to be offset against the cost of borrowing. Ministers hope to exploit the change to fulfil Andy Burnham’s pledge of “growth in every postcode”.

Supporters, including Lord O’Neill of Gatley, who has advised the prime minister, argue that the mechanism would allow higher public investment without unsettling the debt markets.

Burnham said he was looking for “flexibility” within the fiscal rules while Healey told The Times there was “scope for more and more rapid investment”. Although Healey has made clear that he will stay within his predecessor’s fiscal rules, Treasury officials have been asked to see whether there is scope to increase borrowing for investment.

Ministers are keen to find extra funding to raise direct investment in British businesses to stop high-growth start-up companies from moving to the US, where it has traditionally been easier to raise capital.

They also believe the money can be used to help hit the government’s pledge to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this parliament. This could involve giving preferential loans to developers, allowing them to use sites that would otherwise be unviable.

The money is likely to be channelled through public financial institutions such as the British Business Bank, the National Wealth Fund and the National Housing Bank. It could also be used to extend projects such as the Good Growth Fund, which was pioneered by Burnham when he was mayor of Greater Manchester.

The fund provides grants, loans and equity investment in areas such as housing, infrastructure and innovation and uses the money to bring in private investment. It is funding more than £314 million of transport infrastructure projects and £85 million of housing schemes.

The Resolution Foundation think

Continued on page 6

Death ‘linked to Mounjaro’

Caroline Savage, 73, died after increasing the dose of the Mounjaro weight-loss drug she had been taking for about four months, a coroner’s court was told yesterday. Page 4

Nobody does it better than MI6, admit French spies

Charles Bremner Paris

MI6 is admired as the most powerful foreign intelligence service in Europe, according to a peer review by 60 professionals from 25 countries.

France’s General Directorate for External Security (DGSE) secured second place for its global reach and operational capability, including murder, while Slovakia’s service was rated the worst in Europe.

L’Express, the French news magazine, spent three months approaching people in state *services de renseignements* (the intelligence services) to rate their opposite numbers in western countries.

The overwhelming majority put MI6, formally known as the Secret Intelligence Service, top for its expertise in recruiting high-level moles and penetrating the ruling elites of Russia, China, Iran and Turkey.

“The United Kingdom has by far the strongest secret services in Europe. MI6 is extraordinary,” Robert Gorelick, a former CIA station chief, told the magazine.

A former head of the DGSE said: “The British have the ability to play the long game, investing in sources over a ten-year horizon, somewhat like the Russians. And they have a taste for dirty tricks.”

Olivier Mas, a senior DGSE officer until 2017, credited Britain’s long history as a colonial power and, in particular, its 19th-century rivalry with Tsarist Russia for influence over central Asia that became known as the Great Game. “The best minds from Cambridge and Oxford join MI6, which speaks volumes,” he said.

Britain was the first to warn Ukraine about the likelihood of a Russian invasion and it has proved vital for Kyiv since. Ralph Goff, a former chief of operations for Europe and Eurasia at the CIA, said: “The British are in the lead on the Ukrainian file. We are right behind them.”

Britain scored 251 points overall. The

Continued on page 2

News

Today's highlights

7.15am **Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson**, chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission
10.45am The comedian **Rosie Holt**, right
1.30pm **Thomas Reilly**, former UK ambassador to Morocco
3.30pm The electronic duo **Groove Armada** discuss 25 years of their anthem *Superstylin'*
4.20pm **Lord Darroch of Kew**, former UK ambassador to the United States

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TODAY'S EDITION

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Why young high achievers are leaving Britain

The Story

The Office for National Statistics says there has been a fivefold increase in the number of 25 to 34-year-olds leaving the UK since 2022. So why are they going abroad, and could anything be done to encourage them to stay?

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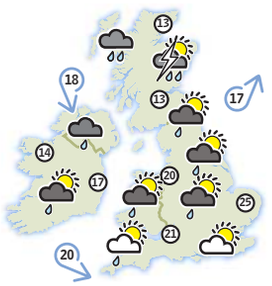
THE WEATHER



Blustery with rain, showers or thunderstorms. Drier in southern areas. **Full forecast, page 51**

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Poor funding 'leaves women to enforce their own rights'

A small win but still a win

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Women seeking to uphold their right to single-sex spaces will be left to enforce the law themselves because the equalities watchdog lacks the resources to do so, its former chair has warned.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine, who oversaw the drafting of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) guidance on single-sex spaces before leaving office, said the law would "remain unenforced by the equalities regulator" because its "meagre funding" meant it could not take up the fight on behalf of women.

The 342-page code, setting out how to implement last year's Supreme Court ruling in For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers, comes into force today. The ruling clarified that the words "woman", "man" and "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 referred to biological sex.

Writing in The Times, Falkner and Akua Reindorf KC, a former commissioner who worked on the code, said organisations in the public and private sectors had been "acting unlawfully all along" by continuing to admit people to single-sex services on the basis of self-identification. Many organisations had repeated that they were "waiting for the EHRC guidance" before changing their processes, the pair wrote.

Some councils continue to oppose the changes. Green-led Lambeth backed a motion at a full council meeting last month calling on it to refuse to implement the code. In Hackney, also led by the Green Party, councillors attended a rally calling on the borough to refuse to implement the guidance. Other London councils are expected to rally against the guidance today.

The code, described as giving "up-to-date examples of how the Equality Act applies to everyday situations", can be relied on in court if there are legal challenges — which Bridget Phillipson, the women and equalities minister, has previously suggested is expected.

However, Falkner and Reindorf also accused ministers of stalling in bringing the code into force. It was sent to the government in September last year but was not laid before parliament until May.

During the delay, the government said it was "working with the EHRC to get the guidance right", but Falkner and Reindorf said the commission was independent and did not collaborate with the government.

They accused Phillipson of having argued against the substance of the code in court while it was with her department. It is understood the government rejects this and a source said court proceedings were against the EHRC's interim update, not the code, though there were similar issues at hand.

An EHRC spokesman said: "We will monitor compliance with the law and take enforcement action where it is proportionate and necessary."

A government spokesman said: "The code has now come into force, and we welcome the clarity it provides."

Kishwer Falkner and Akua Reindorf
Comment

Only a small part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's revised statutory code of practice has received public attention: the section explaining how to implement the 2025 decision of the Supreme Court, which clarified that in the Equality Act 2010 the words "woman", "man" and "sex" refer to biological sex. On that point, the 2011 version of the code was wrong. It said transgender people should generally be permitted to self-identify into single-sex services for the opposite sex.

It had been known that the old code was wrong since 2022, when another case established that "self-ID" is not the law. That is when hospitals should have stopped making female nurses share changing rooms with male colleagues who identify as women. It is when male prisoners who discovered a transgender identity between the courtroom and the prison cell should no longer have been placed into women's jails. Female-only rape crisis centres should have refused entry to men who said they were women. And shops, leisure centres and pubs should have taken down the signs telling customers to use whichever toilets they felt comfortable with.

But those things did not stop. The law was widely ignored until the Supreme Court judgment. Stonewall quickly announced that it was "not law" until the revised code took effect. That was irrefutably wrong, but it took hold.

The fact the new code takes effect today feels like a victory but in reality it changes nothing. The law was already the law, and it will continue to be the law. It will still be disregarded by those who oppose it and it will remain unenforced by the EHRC, which simply cannot take up the cudgels on its meagre funding.

It is not a historic day for women's rights but the code is at least a tool in the armoury of those women and grassroots groups who will have to carry on fighting this uniquely ferocious war. We salute them.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine (former chair of EHRC and distinguished fellow at Policy Exchange); Akua Reindorf KC (former commissioner at EHRC, visiting senior fellow at LSE and barrister specialising in employment and discrimination law)

Legal battle fails to block Gatwick's second runway

Laurence Sleator Transport Correspondent

A second runway at Gatwick will go ahead after campaigners lost their legal fight against expansion.

Last year Heidi Alexander, the transport secretary, approved a £2.2 billion plan to bring the emergency runway at the West Sussex airport into regular use, adding capacity for up to 100,000 extra flights a year.

The project includes moving the emergency northern runway 12 metres north, building taxiways, extending both terminals and adding new gates.

Peter Barclay and Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (Cagne) took legal action against the Department for Transport, including over claims that the government did not properly assess the climate impact.

In June at the High Court, Mr Justice Mould rejected this argument adding that the expansion would not "materially" affect the government's ability to hit its target of being net zero by 2050.

"The secretary of state for transport does not resile from her finding that the proposed development will not fully contribute to the UK's trajectory towards net zero," the judge said. He also rejected an argument about the need for the expansion at Gatwick, given the proximity to Heathrow.

Barclay and Cagne asked the Court of Appeal to allow them to challenge this decision but yesterday Lord Justice Holgate and Lord Justice Dove dismissed their application. "We conclude that each of the grounds of appeal raised by each appellant is unarguable," they wrote. "Neither appeal has a real prospect of success. We also consider that there are no other compelling reasons for either appeal to be heard."

The first flights could take off from the new runway in 2030.

Alexander said: "This is a major milestone ... with expansion unlocking investment and creating thousands of new jobs. Around 13 million more passengers and 100,000 more flights will give holidaymakers greater choice and strengthen global links to help make the UK one of the most attractive places in the world to invest."

Cagne said the appeal court decision was "deeply disappointing" and that it would focus on ensuring the runway met its obligations. "This proposed new runway will come at a significant cost to both the taxpayer and the planet."

Relying on a single runway has been a curb on growth, leading article, page 25

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Nobody does it better than MI6

DGSE, depicted in a fictional but realistic form in the Netflix series *The Bureau*, scored 169 points.

"[The DGSE] is the only service in continental Europe with near-global reach," a Polish intelligence executive told L'Express. "They combine technical collection, human intelligence, and operational action capabilities."

The "action" service of the DGSE, a military organisation, is admired for its clandestine operations to "eliminate" people deemed a threat to French security. François Hollande, the former French president, spoke publicly about commissioning these murders before leaving office. He ordered at least 40 operations to kill "high-value" jihadi targets in the Middle East and Africa after vowing to hunt down every terrorist who attacked French interests, according to a 2017 book.

In third place with 97 points came the much smaller Dutch intelligence service, the AIVD. "It offers the best return on investment! They have the most flawless track record," said Jorge Silva Carvalho, a former director of Portuguese intelligence.

Ukraine came fourth, respected for "innovation, ingenuity and risk-taking", while Germany's BND, widely mocked as an unwieldy bureaucracy, managed fifth place. It is respected for its analytical strength on global issues but less so for its spying powers.

Lasers reveal lost civilisation of 3m people in Amazon rainforest

Network of monuments and roads was built by a society comparable to that of ancient Greece, **Rhys Blakely** writes

Archaeologists have revealed an ancient landscape of vast geometric monuments, ceremonial avenues and long-vanished roads that had lain hidden for centuries beneath the canopy of the Amazon rainforest.

The images expose the extraordinary scale of a "lost civilisation" that flourished in South America nearly 2,000 years ago — a populous, highly organised society that researchers say can be compared to ancient Greece.

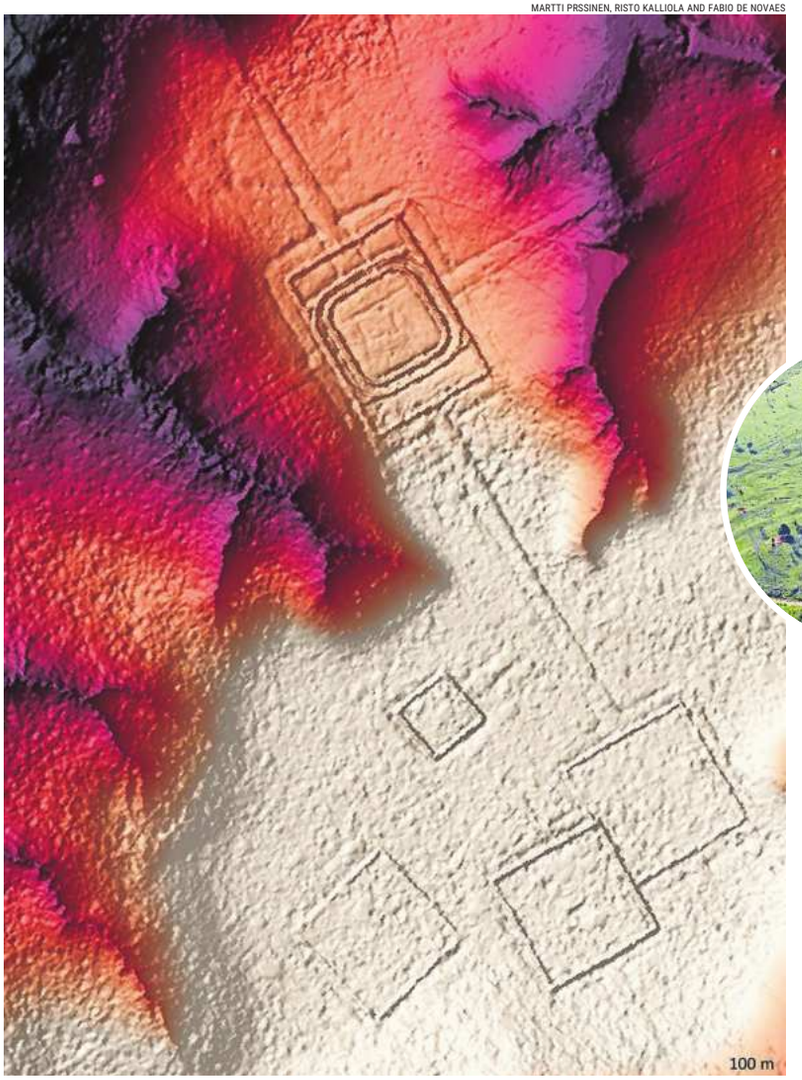
Martti Parssinen, of the University of Helsinki, who led the study, said that until recently the region was viewed as having been virtually untouched by humans. "It was a common idea that the Amazonian forest was a virgin wilderness, occupied only by small groups of hunter-gatherers," he said. "These earthworks totally change our understanding of the supposedly pristine Amazon."

They were built by a complex society that researchers have named the Aquiry civilisation. At its height, from AD 100 to 300, it may have supported a population of 1.25 million to 3 million, a figure close to that of Roman Britain.

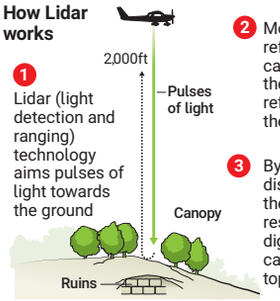
The study, published in the journal Nature, reveals that while Roman engineers were laying roads and building temples, the Aquiry were carving vast circles, squares and monumental enclosures into their forest landscape. Their territory extended across about 183,000 sq km of southwestern Amazonia, an area slightly smaller than Britain, encompassing parts of modern Brazil, Bolivia, and Peru.

The discovery was made possible by airborne Lidar (light detection and ranging), a technique that has transformed archaeology. It involves firing rapid laser pulses from an aircraft. Some pass through gaps in the canopy, bounce off the ground and return to the sensor, allowing researchers to map the landscape beneath the trees.

MARTTI PRSSINEN, RISTO KALLIOLA AND FABIO DE NOVAES



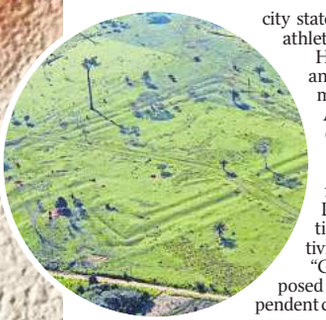
How Lidar works



1 Lidar (light detection and ranging) technology aims pulses of light towards the ground

2 Most beams of light reflect off the forest canopy but a few reach the ground. These reflect back through the gaps in the canopy

3 By measuring the distance light travels to the ground and back, researchers can digitally delete the canopy to create topographic models



Technology has revealed the remarkable geometric monuments and avenues. The Yawanawa, left, from the area, may have known about the civilisation

After surveying almost 4,500 sq km, the team recorded 432 earthworks, only 36 of which had previously been known to science. By combining the results with satellite mapping, the researchers estimate that the wider Aquiry region may contain 24,000 to 30,000 such structures. The largest covered an area of nearly 50 hectares.

Parssinen said the Aquiry civilisation is likely to have resembled ancient Greece, rather than one centralised empire. Different communities appear to have shared religious beliefs, geometric architecture and traditions of public gathering, much as the Greek city states shared gods, festivals and athletic contests.

He added that oral traditions and early colonial accounts may offer a glimpse of the Aquiry. They describe music, dancing, running races, wrestling and ball games, with individual communities fielding their own teams. Leaders may have built prestige by staging elaborate festivities.

"Greek civilisation was composed of more than 1,000 independent city states, and what was common was the same kinds of gods and traditions and the Olympics. I think we have something similar with the Aquiry," he said.

The great enclosures revealed by his team were probably not densely inhabited cities. Instead, they appear to have been ceremonial and political centres where dispersed communities met to make decisions, feast and perform rituals.

The monuments themselves suggest sophisticated planning and organised labour. Pärssinen compared them to European cathedrals: monumental expressions of a shared belief system.

He noted, however, that the civilisation was only ever "lost" to outsiders. Indigenous peoples have long known of their ancient earthworks, regarding some as sacred.

He also pointed out that the Aquiry cultivated maize, squash and manioc, managed Brazil nut trees and palms, and practised forms of agroforestry, all without destroying the Amazon.

"They lived in harmony in that way with the forest," he said. "They made clearings, but not too big to change the ecological systems. Despite their huge numbers, they never converted the rainforest into savanna."

Model village admits making a boob by stripping out its streaker

Araminta Plumptre

A model village has brought back its miniature streaker after its removal prompted an outcry from fans of the tourist attraction.

Godshill Model Village on the Isle of Wight removed the topless female figurine from its miniature football pitch after complaints that it was "inappropriate for a family attraction".

The figurine — named Erica in an apparent nod to Erika Roe, who famously streaked across the pitch at Twickenham during an England v Australia rugby match in 1982 — celebrated the era of prolific streaking at sporting events in the 1970s and 1980s.

However, directors of the attraction said they were worried that streaking was "very much a feature of a different era" and that children nowadays would "no longer recognise" the phenomenon.

Rupert Willoughby, a local resident and regular visitor, said he felt "dismay" when he heard that it had been removed and questioned whether the character could truly cause offence. He suggested that it was in keeping with the light-hearted spirit of the model village.

After Willoughby and others voiced their objections, the model village hosted an online poll which found that 98 per cent of people supported bringing Erica back. A social media post for the village read: "Thank you to everyone who voted in our poll and respectfully shared their thoughts about the Streaker. She will be returning."

The figurine will now be hidden in various locations around the model village and visitors will be encouraged to donate to a local breast cancer charity if they spot her. "So if you spot her hiding in the gardens, there will be a donation pot nearby if you'd like to show your support," the attraction said.

Penny Dyer, director of the model village, previously said that the decision to remove the figurine was prompted by feedback from a small number of visitors.

"Erica" streaked on the football pitch

"The streaker on the football pitch has been part of the model village for many years, and for most visitors has been seen as a light-hearted joke," she said. "However, we've received a small number of comments from visitors who felt it was inappropriate for a family attraction.

"Streaking was very much a feature of a different era. It is far less common and is no longer something that younger visitors recognise, so the model has lost much of its original relevance.

"As a business, we listen to customer feedback and after considering the comments, we decided to remove her.

"We appreciate that not everyone will agree with the decision, but our priority is ensuring all visitors feel comfortable and enjoy their visit."

Any donations will go towards The Breast Friends Isle of Wight, a local breast cancer charity.

News

EMMA SUMMERTON/HARPER'S BAZAAR UK

Staying afloat Cate Blanchett appears in the latest Harper's Bazaar UK. The actress is starring in Electra/Persona at the National Theatre, London, from August 19

Woman on Mounjaro for four months died after raising dose

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent
Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

A woman died after increasing the dose of her Mounjaro weight-loss medication, a coroner's court was told.

Caroline Savage, 73, died at home in October 2024 after being discharged from hospital. She had been taking tirzapatide for about four months, having been prescribed it privately.

Norfolk coroner's court has been examining whether her sudden death could be linked to the powerful drug, which is thought to be taken by millions of people in Britain.

Savage, whose husband Jeremy was a Conservative councillor in Norfolk, died from faecal peritonitis, where faecal matter leaks into the abdominal cavity, caused by a perforation of her intestines.

Family members, represented by the barrister Jasmine Leng, believe that her health concerns were dismissed as Mounjaro side-effects and were not investigated further.

Savage is not the first death to be potentially linked to the weight loss medication. In September 2024, Susan McGowan, a nurse, died after being linked to the drug.

The coroner, Yvonne Blake, was told by experts that when Savage visited a private clinic in London in July 2024 she weighed 128kg and had not been able to lose weight through diet or exercise.

At the time, she was warned by her doctor about side-effects of abdominal pain and constipation — she was advised to drink plenty of water and avoid spicy food and fizzy drinks.

Four months later, the grandmother from Wortwell, Norfolk, weighed 114kg and was advised by her pharmacist to complete her final two 7.5mg doses before increasing it to 10mg. On October 18, 2024, Savage developed acute abdominal pain and was taken to Norfolk and Norwich Hospital's rapid assessment and treatment area, remaining in an ambulance because A&E was too busy.

She eventually was assessed by doctors for pancreatitis, a known complication of weight-loss medications, and given an ultrasound to rule out abdominal aortic aneurysm.

At around 6.30pm, after medics said she seemed comfortable enough to be discharged with pain medication and advice, Savage left the hospital.

But she collapsed at home shortly after midnight and became unresponsive. Her husband called paramedics, who were unable to resuscitate her.

During a post-mortem examination, her cause of death was found to be faecal peritonitis.

There is no established evidence linking this condition to Mounjaro, but potential new links were discussed at the hearing. There have only been a handful of inquests that have examined links to weight-loss medication. A small number of inquests are examining the impact of weight-loss drugs but there are no known cases where a coroner has proved a conclusive link.

The hospital which reviewed Savage's care after her death said her tests and scans were within normal limits.

The hearing was told that if a person already had diverticular disease, which affects the intestine, the side-effects of Mounjaro might cause enough pressure in the intestines to result in a perforation.

Savage was never diagnosed with either pancreatitis or diverticular disease.

The family's barrister submitted that Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights — the right to life — should be engaged because of potential systemic failures in communication, documentation and clinical decision-making at the hospital.

Leng argued that clinicians repeatedly assessed Savage's pain shortly after morphine had been administered and may not have appreciated the significance when deciding whether further investigations were needed.

Alison Brockhurst, a solicitor representing the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, argued that Savage's death was from natural causes and the high threshold for engaging Article 2 had not been met.

She accepted record-keeping "wasn't as good as it could have been" but said evidence showed detailed discussions had taken place between clinicians in person and that appropriate pathways had been followed.

The court was adjourned and the coroner will return this month to deliver a narrative conclusion.

Behind the story

Caroline Savage was 73

The majority of patients taking jabs such as Wegovy and Mounjaro report some side effects (Poppy Koronka writes).

In total 30 side effects are listed on the patient information leaflet given to patients taking Mounjaro, the brand name for tirzepatide.

The most common of these — nausea — affects about one in four people. Other common side effects include diarrhoea, bloating, hair loss and dizziness.

Gastrointestinal side effects take place because the drugs slow down the rate at which the body digests food and delays the emptying of the stomach.

Most side effects are not too alarming, but some rarer complications require medical attention. This includes pancreatitis, a rare side effect which is estimated to affect roughly 0.2 per cent to 1 per cent of patients taking Mounjaro. This is a condition when the pancreas becomes inflamed, leading to severe pain that can require surgery. It can lead to tissue damage, septic shock and deadly multi-organ failure.

There is also a slightly increased risk of gallbladder problems, as rapid weight loss can lead to painful gallstones.

Quintagram® No 2638

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Timepiece (5)

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2 Esteem (6)

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3 Questionnaire (6)

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4 Large tropical lizard (7)

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5 Supermarket payment area (8)

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A	A	C	C	C	D	E	E
E	G	H	H	I	K	M	N
O	O	O	R	R	R	R	S
T	T	T	U	U	V	W	Y

Solutions see T2 MindGames p14
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p15

Met inspector on trial

A Metropolitan Police inspector left a junior colleague feeling "like a piece of meat" after allegedly grabbing her in an intimate place on a night out at a bar in Soho, London, in 2023, a court heard. Dave Newman, 39, from Luton, denies three sexual assault charges involving three female colleagues. The trial at Southwark crown court continues.

Tycoon's planning blow

A billionaire businessman said he was "profoundly disappointed" after permission was granted for four logistics warehouses at Baynards Green, Oxfordshire. Wafic Saïd, 86, who brokered Britain's largest arms export deal in the 1980s, criticised Cherwell district council after it withdrew objections to the "XXL size" Tritax Logistics development.

Rain returns to Kew

Kew Gardens has ended its longest dry spell since its rainfall records began in 1871 after a brief shower yesterday, its first rain since June. July was the driest month ever recorded in England and Wales. Half of England is now in drought with hosepipe bans in place for 23 million people. Thundery showers are expected in mid-August.

Food before family

A third of Britons take more photos of food on holiday than they do of their family, according to a survey of 2,000 people by Chase bank. Respondents took an average of 39 photos a day, or 546 over a fortnight-long holiday. Young adults were most likely to take more photos of food than of their loved ones, with 57 per cent of those aged 18 to 29 admitting it.

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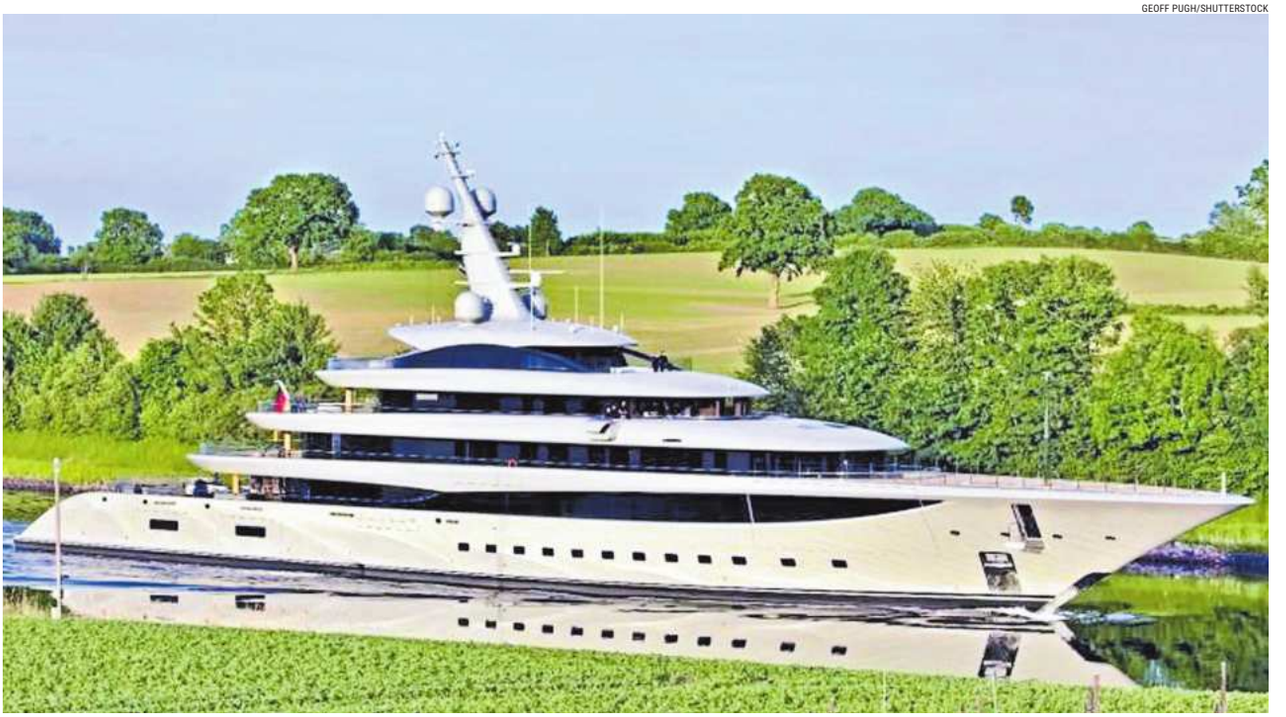
Banker and £350m yacht hit storm

Revolut co-founder is accused of failing to pay commission when he bought the vessel, writes **James Hurley**

GEOFF PUGH/SHUTTERSTOCK



The 102m yacht bought by Nik Storonsky, below, in January, requires a crew of up to 34 and is avaliable for rent for about €2.8 million a week, including expenses

The billionaire head of Revolut bank is being sued for €17.5 million over a superyacht deal.

Cecil Wright & Partners claims in a filing in the High Court that Nik Storonsky went "behind its back" to avoid paying commission on a €350 million yacht.

The superyacht brokerage claims it suggested to Storonsky, 42, that he buy the 102m vessel being built by Lürssen, a German shipyard, last year. The yacht includes a 25ft glass-bottomed infinity pool, a beach club and a cryotherapy chamber.

However, Storonsky bought the yacht directly from the seller in January, according to Cecil Wright.

The brokerage, whose headquarters are in London, claims it is legally entitled to a 5 per cent commission as the "effective cause" of the sale, despite allegedly being cut out of the final transaction.

The superyacht was commissioned by Patrick Dovigi, a Canadian businessman and former ice hockey player. It was sold to a Brazilian banker who was arrested for alleged fraud late last year and Dovigi bought the vessel back before selling it to Storonsky.

Storonsky's family office has said the lawsuit is "without merit" and would be defended. "As it's now a legal matter, we won't be commenting further," a spokesman said.

Chris Cecil-Wright, founder of the luxury yacht broker, told the Financial Times, which first reported the allegations, that it was the first time he had taken legal action against a client but said he felt strongly about pursuing the claim. Storonsky, a British citizen who was born in Russia, set up Revolut with about £300,000 of his savings. The business has become the crown jewel of Britain's fintech industry since Storonsky and his co-founder Vlad Yatsenko began the business in 2015.

With operations spanning payments and crypto trading, Revolut recently secured approval to start a bank in Britain, which is expected to fuel the next stage of its growth as it works towards an eventual blockbuster stock market listing, possibly in the US.

It was valued at $75 billion by a share sale last year and is growing rapidly, with about 75 million customers.

According to Robb Report, an industry title, the yacht is said to include ten cabins for up to 12 guests while its "beach club" on the lower deck includes a bar, dining area, lounge and two terraces. The yacht is also said to include a gym, a helipad, beauty salon, movie theatre, sauna and spa.

According to charter records, the superyacht requires a crew of up to 34 and can be hired from €2.4 million a week, although expenses push the cost up to about $2.8 million.

Storonsky, who renounced his Russian citizenship in 2022 after the invasion of Ukraine, is said to have a demanding and contentious management style. He lists the UK as his country of residence on Companies House filings. His family office had previously changed his address to the United Arab Emirates, prompting regulatory concerns, but the move was said to have been an administrative mistake.

Top crime official loses burlesque claim

Pippa Crawford, David Brown

A senior National Crime Agency official who was fired for accepting undeclared hospitality from a PR company, including a night at a burlesque club, has lost his claim of unfair dismissal.

Charlie Edwards, who was the NCA's director of strategy, was invited to an Oscars celebration party by the owner of Freuds, which was awarded a contract worth up to £1.4 million to help the agency mark its tenth anniversary.

A judge at a south London employment tribunal rejected Edwards's claim that he was unfairly dismissed from his £130,000-a-year job at the NCA, which tackles serious organised crime and bribery.

Edwards denied wrongdoing. He told the tribunal that he met Julia Bainbridge of Freuds in his previous role at the Cabinet Office, which awarded the PR firm a £50,000 contract in 2019.

He joined the NCA in September 2021. Four months later, Bainbridge invited him to the launch party of Freuds+, a spinoff "offering". The day after the party, Bainbridge emailed Edwards and another civil servant at the Cabinet Office with the subject: "So Charlie and I have been hatching a plan ..." In June 2022 Bainbridge paid for lunch with Edwards at the National Gallery, at which they discussed the NCA's upcoming tenth anniversary.

Freuds+ and one other company made formal bids to aid the anniversary and Freuds+ won the contract, which began on March 1, 2023. Bainbridge sent Edwards an invitation on behalf of the company's owner, Matthew Freud, to attend a party at the Lio burlesque club in the West End of London in April 2023. It touted a "one-of-a-kind cabaret performance incorporating artists, acrobats, singers and burlesque style dancers, followed by ... dancing."

Charlie Edwards was the National Crime Agency's director of strategy

Edwards told the tribunal the party was a "work event" that he attended so he could sign approval forms for Freuds' account team. In May 2023, Bainbridge paid for a breakfast with Edwards at the Wolseley, an exclusive restaurant in Mayfair. Edwards paid for his own coffee during a meeting with Bainbridge at Notes café in November 2022 and for his own lunch at the Rose pub in February 2023. He did not register any of the meetings with the NCA.

Edwards was ruled to have committed gross misconduct after an investigation found he breached the civil service code. Judge Paul Abbott rejected Edwards' claim for unfair dismissal. He described it as "not well-founded", adding: "It is clear that Mr Edwards still does not really accept he did anything wrong." He added it was "extremely farfetched to consider that the event as described in the cover email was suitable for entirely work-related activity".

However, he found Edwards, who now works at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, should have had more notice of his dismissal and compensation is to be agreed.

Edwards referred to this last finding in saying he was "pleased that the tribunal found that I was wrongfully dismissed", before adding: "While my claim for unfair dismissal was not upheld, I respect the tribunal's judgment and am grateful for the consideration given to the case." The NCA said it "expects the highest standards of conduct from our officers, and the tribunal's findings included that the agency's decision to dismiss in this case was fair". Freuds was asked to comment.

British model is the 'face' of Russian fashion brand

Lara Wildenberg

The supermodel Rosie Huntington-Whiteley is facing an online backlash after a Russian fashion brand posted photos of her modelling its products while the war in Ukraine continues.

Ekonika, one of Russia's best-known footwear and accessories brands, shared images of the former Victoria's Secret Angel on its website, its Telegram channel and in advertising displays across Moscow.

On Instagram, the brand described Huntington-Whiteley, fiancée of the Hollywood actor Jason Statham, as the face of its collection but did not tag her. The account has since removed the photographs. Huntington-Whiteley has made no public comment about the controversy.

Angry messages instead flooded beneath an unrelated photograph posted six days ago showing the model sunbathing in Malta. Commenters called the apparent collaboration "indefensible".

Despite deleting the Instagram material, Ekonika insists that its campaign with Huntington-Whiteley, 39, is on track. In a statement carried by the influential Russian fashion Telegram channel MUR, which has more than 210,000 subscribers, Ekonika said: "Content featuring the model is subject to regional restrictions on its use on Instagram."

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley has made no comment about the campaign

Ekonika is not owned or directly controlled by the Kremlin, but is a significant name in the business world in President Putin's Russia. Its controlling shareholder, Andrei Iliopulo, has longstanding links to Russia's political, commercial and Orthodox establishment.

Historical child sex abusers may still be freed early

Fiona Hamilton Chief Reporter
Daisy Eastlake, Ollie Cole
Jessica Sharkey

Historical child sex abusers will still be eligible for early release from prison, despite a pledge from Andy Burnham to exclude them.

The prime minister announced on Monday that criminals found guilty of "rape, serious child sex and other grooming offences" would no longer be released at the halfway point of their sentence to free up prison places.

It has emerged that the rules will not apply to child sex offences that took place before the law changed in 2003, even if the perpetrator was brought to justice more recently.

Vicki Crawford was 14 when she was attacked in the late 1980s by a man who was jailed for seven years in 2024.

But he was found guilty of indecent assault — which would have been the charge at the time the offence was committed — rather than sexual activity with a child, a distinction introduced just over two decades ago.

Crawford received a note from the victim contact scheme run by the probation service telling her that while rape and certain child sex offences would be excluded from the reviewed early release scheme, "all other changes will proceed as planned".

The note added: "I recognise this may not be the outcome you were hoping for."

Crawford told The Times: "They've taken a lazy approach and not looked at what offences mean in real terms. They don't class mine as serious enough.

"It's a total double standard to do that to victims of historical sex offences because it's an easy out for them.

"It still feels like yet another betrayal. I've had a lot of them throughout the justice system in my own case. And it scares me that there are going to be a lot of other people that don't fully understand why they've been excluded."

Claire Waxman, the victims' commissioner, is understood to be seeking urgent clarification after the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) appeared unable to specify which crimes would be excluded from the early release scheme.

Waxman had been assured that a list of offence categories would be shared with her office, but The Times understands that this is yet to materialise.

Announcing the revised policy, No 10 said Burnham had ordered that "rape, serious child sex and other grooming offences" would be barred from changes to prison sentences.

But the MoJ was unable to identify which child sexual offences would not be counted as "serious".

A source in the department said the "vast majority" of offences associated with "paedophilia" would be "caught" by the exclusions but was unable to give examples of what would be left out or point to a list of such offences. The MoJ was contacted for comment.

The term "serious" prefaces child sexual offences five times in the government's official announcement of the updated early release scheme. The distinction has concerned charities, victim support groups and lawyers. Amy Clowrey, a director at Switalskis Solicitors who represents child sexual abuse victims, said: "All abuse perpetrated against children is serious and must be seen as such by the government. Not doing so would put children at significant risk of harm. Creating a distinction between 'serious' and 'non-serious' child sexual offences risks minimising the experiences of many survivors."

Burnham said: "I wanted to go even further as I know there will still be concerns about other offenders having their sentence shortened. But it's not possible without the prison system reaching capacity and collapsing, which would put public safety at much greater risk."

Islay O'Hara, chief executive of the charity One in Four, which supports adult survivors of child sexual abuse, said: "One in Four understands the huge challenges that victims/survivors deal with reporting within the criminal justice system and how hard it is to get a case to trial and conviction.

"The minimum they should expect amid the early-release programme is complete transparency and clarification of exactly what child abuse offences are not considered 'serious' within the MoJ interpretation. We await further information with interest."

Matt Vickers, the shadow minister for policing, told Times Radio yesterday: "[Burnham] then talks about serious child sex offences. By my book, anybody who commits a sexual offence against a child, it's a serious issue, and they should be staying in prison for the course of their sentence."

Burnham ordered that the policy be reviewed after the family of PC Andrew Harper, who was killed while responding to a crime in 2019, raised concerns over the eligibility for release of two of his killers. Albert Bowers and Jessie Cole were jailed for 13 years in 2020 for manslaughter. They will remain eligible despite the review.

Alex Norris, the justice secretary, apologised to Harper's family on behalf of the government, but insisted the decision was necessary.

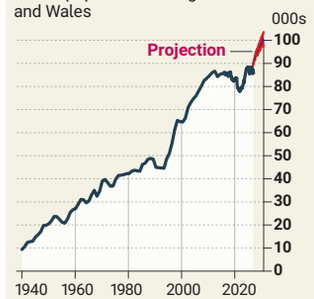
Aileen O'Connor, chair of the Thames Valley Police Federation, told The Daily Telegraph: "This is not justice. How is that any form of deterrent for anybody that can go out and commit a crime and take the life of a police officer?" She vowed to "throw everything I can behind it to get this overturned in some way, shape or form", including a possible judicial review.

Letters, page 24; roulette of release, leading article, page 25

Andy Burnham said he wanted to cut the scheme further

Incarceration nation

Prison population of England and Wales



*For male and female prisoners of all ages and custody types

Offence type

Prison population under an immediate custodial sentence by offence group

	Men
Violence against the person	22,964
Sexual offences	15,761
Drug offences	8,238
Theft offences	5,921
Robbery	4,633
Public order offences	2,730
Crimes against society	2,413
Possession of weapons	2,374
Summary non-motoring	833
Criminal damage & arson	833
Fraud offences	385
Summary motoring	215
Offence not recorded	94

Borrowing splurge in bid for growth

Continued from page 1

tank said exploiting the fiscal rules could mobilise an extra £9 billion a year and could help offset a lack of long-term investment since Britain was forced to pull out of the European Investment Bank after Brexit.

"Rachel Reeves's changes to the fiscal rules mean that the government now has greater scope to address that challenge by making productive investments in the economy that in the long run will pay for themselves," said Elliott Christensen, a senior economist at the foundation. "The new chancellor should start by boosting the scale of the National Wealth Fund [which] would mean an additional £9 billion annual investment by 2031 in real terms."

He added: "While these kind of investments would obviously increase government borrowing costs the critical difference is that these will be offset by the financial returns made by investments and by investing in productive areas that will grow the economy in the long run. As a result we think that the bond markets will consider them as credible commercial market investment and not materially push up the cost of borrowing."

Nick Ridpath, a research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said that although there was not an "unlimited pot of money" there was "some flexibility" to increase public sector investment particularly in areas which ministers might want to prioritise such as research and development.

"At the last budget there was around £27 billion worth of headroom that could theoretically be used to increase investment, though there are clear drawbacks to putting too much of a dent in the fiscal buffer," he said. "They could also use public financial institutions, such as the National Wealth Fund, to support infrastructure projects to boost growth without hitting up against its fiscal rules, though this requires that the investment also bring positive returns to the private sector."

A Treasury source said Healey was looking at a "range of options" to boost investment spending before his first budget in October, but his "No 1 priority" was to maintain fiscal discipline.

Another source said ministers were "ambitious" for the scheme, believing it could help implement Burnham's devolution agenda by providing extra financing for mayors.

"Burnham has already shown how this can work in Manchester and this gives him the scope to roll it out across the country," they said.

Trump team set to welcome 'Ed Miliwatt' to Washington

Max Kendix Washington Correspondent
Katy Balls Washington Editor

Ed Miliband arrives in Washington with a delicate diplomatic mission — and a new Maga nickname.

Pointing to his commitment to net zero, American officials have branded him "Ed Miliwatt" in a joking reference to the power generated by his policies as energy secretary. The Times understands that Chris Wright, the US energy secretary, is among those to have used the nickname.

Miliband's appointment as foreign secretary has raised eyebrows among Maga circles in Washington. He has prided himself on international law and supported an increase in foreign aid. Miliband has described Trump as a racist and misogynist who "lowered the bar for idiocy". He has also cited "tackling the climate crisis" as one of his top priorities.

However, a Foreign Office source insisted the Americans were "willing to give him a chance". They pointed out that David Lammy made disparaging remarks about Trump before being appointed as foreign secretary but still built a strong relationship with JD Vance, the vice-president.

Today Miliband will meet Marco Rubio, the US secretary of state, with a focus on the Middle East and Ukraine. "The government is committed to nurturing our strong, enduring and essential alliance with the US," Miliband said.

CLAIRE CORKERY; OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA

Cases where offenders are eligible for early release include those of Claire Corkery, whose parents Sue and Tom were killed by a speeding driver; Maya Chappell, right, whose mother allowed her death; Elle Edwards, below, who was shot dead outside a pub; and Archie York, far left, who was killed when a cannabis factory exploded in a block of flats

Renewed anguish for bereaved families

Victims and bereaved families have criticised the government after learning that offenders in their cases will not be exempt from the early-release scheme (Jess Sharkey writes).

Under revised plans announced on Monday after a public outcry, rapists and many child sex offenders will be excluded. However, families of those killed by means including manslaughter, dangerous driving and child cruelty have criticised the plans.

The Sentencing Act excludes from the scheme some of the most serious and dangerous offenders, such as murderers serving life terms and those on extended sentences.

Maya Chappell

The family of Maya, who was shaken to death aged two by the partner of her mother, Dana Carr, in 2022, said they remained "deeply concerned" that Carr, who was jailed for allowing her death, is still eligible for early release.

Michael Daymond was jailed for life for murder. Carr was sentenced to nine years for child cruelty and allowing the death of a child. In his sentencing remarks, Mr Justice Bright said she "lied prodigiously" to protect Daymond. She could be released three years into her sentence.

Gemma Chappell, Maya's great-aunt, said the policy put "victims in a box, saying these victims are more important than those victims". She said Carr had served barely the length of her daughter's short life and shown "no rehabilitation".

"These people are going to be in society, they're going to be your next-door neighbour, they're going to be your parents' next-door neighbour," she said. "This isn't just affecting us, it's affecting hundreds of families up and down the UK."

Elle Edwards

Tim Edwards, whose daughter Elle was shot outside a pub in Wirral, Merseyside, on Christmas Eve 2022, has learnt her killer's accomplice could be released in October.

Connor Chapman was sentenced to life for Elle's murder. Thomas Waring was jailed for nine years for possessing a prohibited weapon and assisting an offender. The trial heard Chapman left a Skorpion sub-machinegun at Waring's home after the shooting.

"The person who assisted in her murder fits the criteria for early release," Edwards said. "It's like a kick in the teeth. It just shows that the families, the victims, don't get a say in any of this. It just shows they don't care." He said he had written to the prime minister but had not received a response.

Edwards added: "The gun has never been found. That gun is still out there. What's to stop him coming out and picking that gun up again?"

Archie York

The mother of Archie, who was seven when a drug dealer's cannabis factory exploded in a block of flats in October 2024, killing him, has said she will "keep fighting" to stop his killer from being released early.

Reece Galbraith was jailed for 14 years for the manslaughter of Archie and Jason Laws, 35, who was also using the drugs lab in Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Archie's mother, Katherine Errington, and his seven-week-old brother, Finlay, were buried beneath bricks and debris but were pulled to safety by Archie's father.

Errington told The Chronicle: "I'm gutted. It doesn't get any worse than what he did. They need to look at each offence more closely. I'm not staying quiet, I have still got a few years left. I'm just going to fight this until he's released. Why should I just take this on the chin? I'm not accepting it. The way I see it is I have still got three kids now and I'm still mothering Archie. This is what I can do for him."

Tom and Sue Corkery

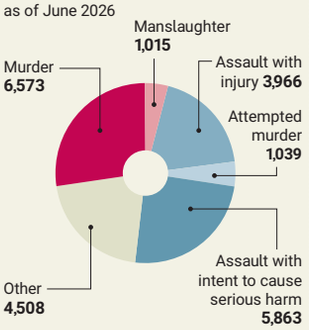
Claire Corkery, whose parents were killed by a speeding driver in 2024, said justice has been "snatched away" from her family.

Scott Gunn was found guilty of death by dangerous driving and jailed for 16 years in November last year.He will be eligible for early release after serving half his sentence. Corkery said he showed "no remorse" during the trial. "I don't want to see rapists and sex offenders released early but it is almost like a tiered system," she said. "We've got a life sentence. I think about my parents' death every waking moment. It's always there and there's no early release from that. It feels like justice was served there by the judge and now it is being snatched away from us."

Women
1,048
136
263
427
207
117
103
75
60
53
66
7
18

Violence against the person

How the numbers break down as of June 2026



Time spent in custody

Average custodial sentence length by offence group	Ave custodial sentence	Ave custody time under early release scheme
Violence against the person	2 years	7.8 months
Sexual offences	6.2 years	2.1 years
Robbery	3.6 years	1.2 years
Theft offences	7.8 months	2.6 months
Criminal damage and arson	2.2 years	8.9 months
Drug offences	3.3 years	1.1 years
Possession of weapons	1.1 years	4.3 months
Public order offences	8.7 months	2.9 months
Miscellaneous crimes against society	1.2 years	4.9 months
Fraud offences	1.8 years	7.4 months

2025 data for indictable offences only. * Applies to offenders serving standard determinate sentences who previously would have been automatically released at 40 or 50 per cent of their sentence. ** Does not include prisoners serving life sentences or other indeterminate or those convicted of rape or serious child sex or other grooming offences

Source: Ministry of Justice

Former neo-Nazi to stand for Tories

Seren Hughes

Kemi Badenoch has backed her party's selection as a council candidate of a former neo-Nazi convicted of harassing an MP.

Joshua Bonehill-Paine, who was recently revealed as the creator of the Crewkerne Gazette, the political satire video platform, has announced his selection as the Conservative Party candidate for Crewkerne South in Somerset in next year's council elections.

Bonehill-Paine, from Yeovil, previously described himself as a "nationalist, fascist, theorist and supporter of white rights", according to The Guardian. He has numerous convictions, including for harassing a former MP, Luciana Berger, who is Jewish, sharing antisemitic material online before a planned neo-Nazi rally and malicious communications over an anti-Islam hoax. He insists that he has been rehabilitated, and has trained police officers on anti-semitism.

Joshua Bonehill-Paine was jailed in 2016 but said he had been rehabilitated

Badenoch, the Tory leader, said: "This is not just someone that we've picked up who's a convicted criminal; this is somebody who is actively working to help communities, especially Jewish communities, and this is what I want to see." She said she believed in "second chances for good people".

Karen Newman, vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said: "It beggars belief that any party would select as a candidate a multiply-convicted felon and the founder of a far-right group called National British Resistance."

In 2016 Bonehill-Paine was jailed for two years for racially aggravated harassment after subjecting Berger to a campaign of antisemitic abuse.

Berger said Badenoch had got the decision "very, very wrong". She said she endured "hell" giving evidence against Bonehill-Paine. "He showed zero contrition and thought it ok to do a full blown Nazi salute to his supporters in the gallery. This case still haunts me."

Rookie MPs 'fail to give laws scrutiny'

Aubrey Allegretti
Chief Political Correspondent

A lack of experience and knowledge among MPs means they are failing to scrutinise new laws, leaving it up to peers to provide "real democratic accountability", the former chief clerk of the House of Commons has warned.

Lord Lisvane, who worked in parliament for 42 years, said any reform of the House of Lords should be accompanied by a review of the lower chamber as well. Writing in The Times, the former clerk of the Commons from 2011 to 2014 said singling out the Lords for improvement was "the wrong target".

He was responding to a cross-party group of parliamentarians who called for a commission to examine options for Andy Burnham to replace the Lords.

Lisvane wrote: "The 2024 general election brought into parliament 335 new MPs — 52 per cent of the House — with no parliamentary experience; no experience or knowledge of legislative scrutiny or of calling governments to account. It would be surprising if there were any other major national institution in which more than half of its members had no practical experience of its core tasks. The result is easy to see.

"Most legislation barely touches the sides in the Commons, and it is left to the House of Lords to act as an expert scrutineer of what government all too often seeks to enact without real democratic accountability."

He said those who had suggested a commission on Lords reform had "picked the wrong target".

Commons reform, letters, page 24

News

Sun, sea and Somali families at beach resort

David Chazan Hardelot-Plage

About 50 migrants wearing orange lifejackets sprinted past sunbathers on the beach at the French resort of Hardelot-Plage after spotting a dinghy roughly 100 yards offshore.

Some clutched babies or toddlers as they ran, but their dash was futile. Each time the small boat, already overloaded with migrants, tried to edge closer so more people could wade out and clamber aboard, a French police boat and officers on jet skis blocked its path.

Eventually, the man at the helm gave up and the dinghy headed out into the Channel, bound for the Kent coast.

The migrants, most of them from Eritrea and Somalia, were left standing on the beach, about 40 miles south of Calais, as holidaymakers looked on.

"It's really sad," said Sarah, 42, a teacher from Petersfield in Hampshire who declined to give her surname.

"I'm still wrapping my head around this trauma, them risking their lives and us being on holiday. It's difficult but in some ways it's good to see it for yourself. When you read about it, it doesn't have the same impact. They're risking their lives to make this crossing. I can't imagine what some of them must have been through to get this far, especially the women."

A young French woman in a swimsuit approached a Somali man carrying a baby. "Are you hungry?" she asked him, holding her credit card. "Come with me, I'll get you some food."

Minutes later, as a group of Somali women sat with young children on rocks, drying their clothes and shoes, a French holidaymaker in swimming trunks approached with a tray of ice creams, which the children quickly ate.

"It's really hard seeing this in person," said Alice Bowles, 19, from London. "You feel sorry for the families and the children."

Aude, 62, a retired nurse on holiday, said: "The other night we saw lights and heard people screaming 'don't leave me behind'. It really touched me. I wonder if it will end up being worth it for these people to take all these risks to get to England — whether their future will really be better."

The drama that unfolded on the beach is becoming an increasingly frequent sight for holidaymakers.

About 700 migrants crossed to the UK in a single day last week from Hardelot-Plage and nearby beaches. Since then, French police have stepped up surveillance. On Monday, dozens of officers patrolled the beach while a police boat waited offshore.

The Kurdish people-smugglers who organise most small boat crossings used to pick up migrants around Calais, but tighter police checks have pushed them south to Hardelot-Plage and other long sandy beaches. The dinghy that arrived off Hardelot-Plage yesterday was launched from somewhere further south, where there was less police presence, according to an NGO worker who declined to be named.

"We think it took it several hours to reach here and the people-smugglers must have taken about 20 migrants with them when they went to inflate and launch it so it would be more difficult for the police to intervene for fear of causing someone to drown," he said.

The tactic exposes the limitations of a new £660 million UK-France deal for French police to patrol their beaches over the next three years. Signed in April, it allows police to intercept migrant boats only if there are fewer than 20 people on board, in an attempt to reduce the number of people who must be rescued in the event of a capsize.

The gendarmes said they could not intervene before the migrants waded into the sea because it was not illegal for them to stand on the beach waiting.

Sara, 40, from Keren in Eritrea, who tried to cross with her 15-year-old daughter Fiona, said her brother and father had been conscripted into the army and killed in fighting with Ethiopian forces.

"People are conscripted and they never come home," she said. "If they are not killed, they are kept I don't know where and not allowed to return to their families. I love my country but the situation is terrible. I wish I could live there but no one can live like that."

KAMIL ZIHNIOGLU FOR THE TIMES; TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Migrants wait for a boat among holidaymakers at Hardelot-Plage where one French tourist offered refreshments. When a boat arrived there was a scramble to get aboard

Migrants saved from dinghy blaze

Seren Hughes, David Chazan Paris

The French and British authorities rescued 173 migrants from a burning dinghy in the Channel yesterday.

The boat's engine caught fire while it was in France's search-and-rescue area near British waters, and it rapidly began to break apart, the French maritime prefecture of the Channel said.

The migrants jumped overboard, but all 173 were rescued by British and French authorities and returned to France. No casualties were reported.

It was one of the biggest rescue operations in the Channel since 2018, according to French officials. The British coastguard and Eastbourne's all-weather lifeboat attended alongside French rescue vessels with support from the UK's Border Security Command maritime operations.

The boat had left the coastal village of Veules-les-Roses in Normandy on Monday, French authorities said.

French rescue vessels had tracked the overloaded dinghy as it headed towards British waters. Before the fire, five people on board had required medical assistance.

A few hours later, after the fire, French vessels rescued 103 people and British boats another 54. The French authorities later revised the figures upwards. The migrants were to be disembarked at the Channel port of Boulogne-sur-Mer for medical assessment and assistance.

The British Maritime and Coastguard Agency said: "A vessel caught fire earlier this morning whilst in the French search and rescue region. UK vessels and a lifeboat are assisting."

Had the dinghy reached British shores, it would have been carrying the second highest number of migrants to make a successful crossing in a single boat, the Home Office said. The record was set on July 23 when 165 migrants reached the UK in a single dinghy.

Alex Norris, the justice secretary, said: "It's a very visible reminder both of the dangerous nature of those crossings and of the blind indifference that human traffickers have for life on those boats." Work with the French had resulted in postive steps forward, he said.

Chris Philp, the shadow home secretary, said: "This is why it's so wrong that French police stand by and do nothing while the illegal migrant boats embark. Lives are being risked."

A total of 2,057 people have crossed the Channel to the UK since Andy Burnham became prime minister on July 20, Home Office statistics show. There were 1,962 crossings in the same period last year, but this year's total is significantly down on this time in 2025. The provisional total for the year is 14,526, 43 per cent lower than the number recorded this time last year.

At least 15 people have died this year while attempting to cross in small boats. Four people died last week.

People-smugglers have started using boats of up to 12 metres instead of eight to ten metres, preferring larger boats that maximise profit per crossing, French residents say. They may also be reacting to increased police patrols and enhanced surveillance on the French coast under a new, three-year, £660 million UK-France deal.

Migrants say the people-smugglers do not pilot the dinghies but leave a migrant to take the helm, guided by a GPS device. That person crosses free of charge while others pay between €1,000 and €4,000. Many people-smugglers reportedly have a sliding scale of fares based on nationality. Africans pay less than Asians, who are considered better off.

The arrival in the Spanish north African territory of Ceuta of tens of thousands of migrants who swam around the border fence last week has led to fears that some may come to the UK.

Burnham, visiting Dover's joint command room for monitoring small boat crossings on Sunday, said enforcement had to be increased alongside the offer of safer routes into the country.

Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, said work to tackle small boat crossings was beginning to "bear fruit".

The government said: "British vessels supported a French search and rescue operation. This incident underlines the terrible dangers of small boat crossings. We continue to work relentlessly with the French and our partners overseas to prevent these perilous journeys."

Ceuta migrant crisis, page 27

Storm in a D cup over bra cheating claims at Tour de Femmes

Riders at the Tour de France Femmes faced more stringent checks before the stage four time-trial yesterday after reports that riders may be padding their bras to make themselves more aerodynamic (Joseph Harston writes).

The Dutch publication WielerFlits reported on Sunday that the strategy could be an issue, writing that several women's WorldTeams were concerned about how some riders have visibly larger cup sizes during time-trials compared with road races.

Increasing the size and changing the shape of the chest area for both men and women can provide an advantage for competitors because it redirects the airflow around the body.

However, such a tactic is banned by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), which states in its rules that riders must not use objects "which could modify their morphology".

The complaints about this practice prompted the UCI jury to make an unusual announcement on Monday evening, less than 24 hours before the time-trial.

It stated that when riders attend final checks ten minutes before their respective start time "particular attention will be paid to compliance with article 1.3.032 of the UCI regulations, including non-essential elements and clothing or other items/accessories worn by a rider (including but not limited to helmets, glasses, shoes or in-race communication devices) which could modify riders' morphology".

Past studies have found that chest fairings — effectively anything put down the front of a rider's jersey that changes the shape of their chest — can provide a significant aero advantage and are banned by several sporting bodies.

Research conducted in 2024 by Bert Blocken, professor of aerodynamics at Scotland's Heriot-Watt University and LUT University in Finland, found that chest fairings have the potential to reduce air resistance by up to 3.6 per cent, which would translate to a saving of at least 0.78 seconds per kilometre and therefore could "decide who wins or loses a time-trial".

In men's cycling policing the use of such objects is easier, but it becomes more of a grey area for women, who use different kinds of sports bras in races depending on personal preference.

Some riders have also been known to race without a sports bra for aero gains because it compresses the breasts.

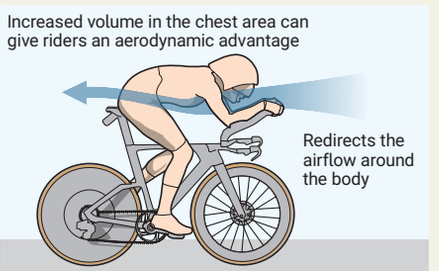
According to WielerFlits, some teams believe that a female juror should check the riders in a closed tent immediately after the time-trial to ensure there are no hidden in their bras or under their aero clothing objects.

At the beginning of the year the UCI announced it would ban chest pockets on jerseys, which riders used to store nutritional products. The governing body found that these were "generally not consumed because they were extremely difficult, or even impossible in race conditions, to access. These pockets result in significant alterations to the riders' body shape."

Triathletes had been known to tuck water bottles down their jerseys for aero gains but the practice has been banned by multiple race organisers.

ALEX BROADWAY/GETTY IMAGES

Women's Tour riders were checked yesterday. Research by Bert Blocken, left, states chest fairings reduce resistance



Sheeran fined for failing to insure Aston Martin

Araminta Plumptre

Ed Sheeran has been convicted and fined after he accidentally failed to insure his 60-year-old classic Aston Martin while it was being restored.

The pop singer, 35, admitted keeping a motor vehicle that does not meet insurance requirements and was fined £666. Sheeran has not driven the silver 1966 car since 2021 when it went in for an overhaul for it to be converted into an electric vehicle. The DVLA spotted that Sheeran had not insured the car while the restoration work was taking place in December.

The Grammy and Emmy-winning singer told Bradford magistrates' court that the car had not been on the road for five years and he believed that it would be covered by the workshop's insurance policy. Sheeran was convicted last week and was also ordered to pay £100 costs and a £266 surcharge.

He was prosecuted on July 31, behind closed doors in the single justice procedure courts, and he sent a letter of explanation alongside his guilty plea.

"The vehicle is a vintage Aston Martin car which, since 2021, has been in the process of full restoration by Aston Workshop Ltd," he wrote.

"The vehicle has remained within the control of the workshop continuously since 2021 and has been kept off public roads and remained within their garage at all times. There has accordingly been no risk to third-party members of the public arising from the uninsured driving of the vehicle.

"I have at no point had physical possession or practical control of the vehicle. In fact, the vehicle has been inoperable since 2021, through the relevant date and to the present day."

Sheeran, who was appointed MBE in 2017 for services to music and charity, apologised for taking up court resources and insisted that he had not received the DVLA's initial offer of an out-of-court fine, but said that he would have paid it immediately.

He claimed that the workshop, which is based in Durham, had assured him that "they maintain their own comprehensive motor trade and road risk insurance policies" and added: "It is for that reason that I never personally took out motor insurance for this vehicle."

Sheeran, whose hit songs include *Shape of You*, *Thinking Out Loud* and *Perfect*, added: "This is not a case involving the deliberate disregard of vehicle insurance obligations, the actual use of an uninsured vehicle, or any intention to avoid the legal requirements under the act.

"Rather this issue has arisen from a genuine administrative misunderstanding concerning an inoperable vehicle that was not being used, and which was genuinely believed to be appropriately covered by insurance policies held by the workshop while the vehicle was in the workshop's possession being assembled."

In his mitigation, Sheeran said that a letter of support had been sent from Aston Workshop Ltd but a court official said that the letter was not on the system and would not have been considered by the magistrate during the sentencing hearing.

As Sheeran's case was dealt with under the single justice procedure system, it could be sent to any magistrates' court regardless of the location of the offence, based on a national database.

He was among 1,451 people across England and Wales to be convicted last week of failing to insure their vehicles.

Ed Sheeran said that he last drove the car in 2021

Rights deal, page 37

Princess Eugenie gives birth to third child in Portugal

Araminta Plumptre

Princess Eugenie has given birth to her third child, a daughter, at a hospital in Lisbon.

The princess, 36, welcomed the girl, with her husband Jack Brooksbank, on Monday evening, Buckingham Palace has announced.

The King and Queen have been informed and were said to be "delighted" by news of her "safe arrival".

Eugenie shared a photo, below, of her newborn daughter, weighing 6lb 9oz, on Instagram yesterday. The photo shows the baby in a pink onesie, gripping her father's index finger. Eugenie captioned the picture: "Jack and I are so excited to announce Baby Girl Brooksbank!! We are beyond in love with our girlie," followed by a string of hearts.

She joins her brothers August, five, and Ernest, three, who were said to be "very excited" when Eugenie revealed in May that she was expecting a third child.

Buckingham Palace said: "Her Royal Highness Princess Eugenie and Mr Jack Brooksbank are delighted to announce the safe arrival of their daughter, born on Monday, 3rd August 2026, at 6.20pm, at a hospital in Lisbon, Portugal. Their Majesties The King and Queen and other members of The Royal Family were delighted to be informed of the news."

The couple divide their time between Lisbon, where Brooksbank, 40, markets a resort, and Ivy Cottage in the grounds of Kensington Palace.

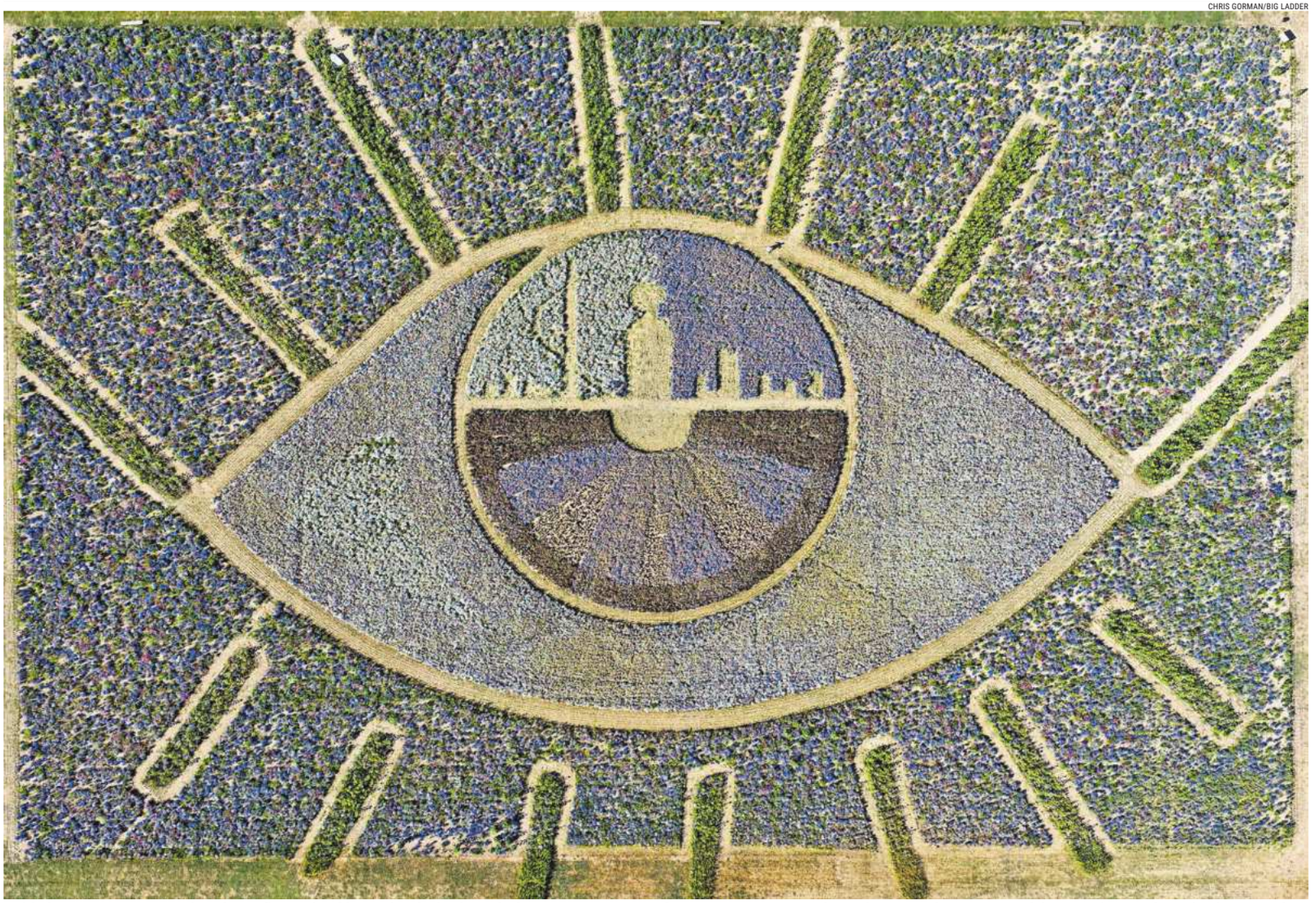
Their daughter's birth in Portugal may mean that she is entitled to apply for an EU passport. The baby will be 15th in line to the throne and is the fifth grandchild of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor after the birth of Princess Beatrice's daughter, Athena Elizabeth Rose Mapelli Mozzi, in January last year.

Eugenie and Brooksbank married in 2018 at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, having met eight years earlier in Verbier in the Swiss Alps.

After leaving Stowe School aged 18, Brooksbank worked in a pub in Chelsea and rejected a career in finance. He works at the luxury CostaTerra Golf and Ocean Club south of Lisbon, where the Duke and Duchess of Sussex stayed this summer.

The couple welcomed their first child, August, on February 9, 2021, followed by Ernest on May 30, 2023.

CHRIS GORMAN/BIG LADDER



Field of vision A giant eye made with cornflowers has bloomed early thanks to the hot summer. Portsmouth street artist My Dog Sighs, real name Paul Stone, created the artwork on Hayling Island in Hampshire

More than 200 NHS sites reliant on paper records

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

The NHS is spending more than £200 million a year storing records in boxes and filing cabinets because hundreds of sites remain entirely reliant on paper.

A report by The King's Fund think tank shows that only five NHS trusts in England have fully digitised patient records, despite government pledges to make the NHS paperless. In total, there are 209 NHS sites — such as diagnostic centres or hospital clinics — which use only paper records, according to analysis of medical records data.

Most NHS hospitals use a combination of digital and paper records to keep hold of information including appointment notes, letters and scan results. But the vast majority do not have enough space on site to store paper files, meaning they have to rent storage units or buildings, often at a significant cost.

Data for 2024-25 shows the NHS spent £239.5 million storing patient records, which covers costs including stationary fees for boxes, folders and filing cabinets.

There have been numerous attempts to get rid of paper records, which increase the risk of errors and poor communication. In 2013, Jeremy Hunt, as Conservative health secretary, said the NHS should be "paperless by 2018". The NHS also promised to be "paper-free at the point of care" by 2020.

Under a ten-year plan to take the health service "from analogue to digital" published last year, the NHS will introduce an electronic "single patient record" from 2028 to replace paper systems. The record will store all medical data on the NHS App, joining up parts of the system such as A&E units, hospital clinics and GPs.

Sarah Woolnough, chief executive of The King's Fund, said the cost of storing paper records was "a really flagrant example of money being spent where it doesn't need to be.

"The NHS has had a commitment to being a paperless institution for many years, so the fact that you've still got 200 sites completely reliant on paper is disappointing and frustrating."

Woolnough said that depending on paper records meant "things can get lost and there can be inaccuracies", which could affect care or treatment.

The NHS receives thousands of complaints relating to communication failures and record-keeping problems every year. Research by Healthwatch shows that nearly one in four adults report inaccuracies or missing details in their medical records.

The implementation of a single patient record will be debated by MPs next month as part of a health bill going through parliament.

A single record would allow doctors and nurses to see the medical history of any patient who attends an A&E unit or hospital anywhere.

Woolnough said: "There is a striking gap between the ambition for a modern, connected health service and the reality on the ground for patients and staff." She said the success of the single record would hinge on spending on digital infrastructure, training for staff, robust privacy and building public confidence in how health data is used.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said the single patient record would be "a secure way for NHS staff to see your medical history wherever you are treated. It will mean you get safer, quicker, more accurate healthcare — without having to repeat your story each time.

"Nearly all NHS trusts already have electronic patient record systems in place, backed by £1.9 billion of NHS England investment. While some trusts still maintain a mix of digital and paper processes, we will continue to promote the benefits of digital transition — for patients and staff alike."

Method of predicting breast cancer misses 95% of cases

Peter Chappell, Eleanor Hayward

Guidelines used by GPs to predict if younger women are at a high risk of breast cancer miss 95 per cent of those who go on to develop the disease, research shows.

At present, women aged under 50 with a strong family history of breast cancer can be referred to specialists for further monitoring. They may be offered genetic tests or regular screening, designed to catch cancer early if they go on to develop it.

However, research from the University of Cambridge involving 1,258 women under 50 has found that assessing risk using family history alone does not flag 95 per cent of women who go on to develop the disease within ten years.

They have developed a new system — which examines factors such as family history, reproductive history, lifestyle and genetics — that was found to identify eight times as many women in the same age group who developed breast cancer. Only about 5 to 15 per cent of breast cancer cases are in women with a family history of the disease.

Published in the British Journal of Cancer, the analysis of data from the Breast Cancer Now Generations study between 2004 and 2011 suggested that using the alternative guidelines for all women under 50 would lead to 26.5 per cent being classed as higher risk and referred for further assessment, compared with 1.4 per cent at present.

Identifying those at the highest risk earlier would give medics a better chance at treating breast cancer, a leading cause of death in women under 50.

Dr Juliet Usher-Smith, of the department of public health and primary care at the University of Cambridge, said: "We need to get better at identifying women at highest risk of breast cancer so that we can intervene early."

Dr Simon Vincent, chief scientific officer at Breast Cancer Now, which supported the study, said: "Finding new ways to identify women at increased risk could help to prevent some breast cancers or detect them earlier, when treatment is more likely to be successful. These findings highlight the limitations of Nice's [the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence] current referral criteria, and so this research must now be carefully considered as part of the current review of its family history guidelines."

Nice said it "welcomes the findings of this study and recognises the potential of multifactorial risk models in improving the identification of women at increased risk of breast cancer in the future". It added, however, that "the current evidence does not warrant a change to our existing familial breast cancer guideline at this time."

Scotland Yard investigated reporter who probed Arday

Emma Yeomans, Marc Horne
Charlotte Alt, Lowri Lewis

The Metropolitan Police spent four months investigating a journalist who emailed questions to a Cambridge academic accused of plagiarism.

Scotland Yard investigated a claim of harassment made last year against a reporter who looked into Jason Arday's academic record. Arday, the youngest black professor to be appointed by Cambridge, has since been accused of plagiarism, which he denies, and making exaggerated claims about his sporting and fundraising achievements.

Yesterday two universities where Arday claimed to have been a visiting professor denied he had held the title, while Cambridge removed a reference to one of his degrees from his staff page.

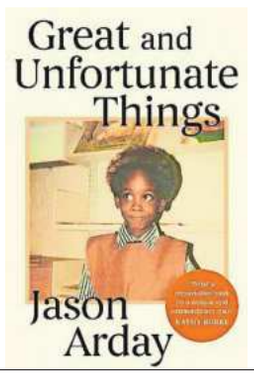
Arday is understood to have hired the law firm Carter-Ruck after inquiries by Jack Grove, a reporter for Times Higher Education. The law firm claimed in a letter to the magazine that the "apparent attack" on Arday "may be ... racially motivated".

The Met closed the case against Grove in February after looking into it for four months. He was not interviewed by police and only found out about the investigation after the Met informed him it would not be taking any action. Grove said: "I stand by my decision to investigate Professor Arday — I approached the story as I would have done any other."

Arday, a sociology of education professor, has come under scrutiny after allegations that he plagiarised his PhD thesis and parts of his published academic research. Archived versions of his biography pages with Jesus College and Cambridge's faculty of education list four degrees: a BA, two MAs and a PhD. But references to an MA in education studies from Liverpool John Moores University — the institution where he did his PhD — have been scrubbed from the pages.

On the Cambridge education faculty page, Arday claims to be a visiting professor in Glasgow's School of Education. However, this was denied by the university. "I can confirm that Professor Arday isn't a visiting professor at the University of Glasgow," a spokesman said. When asked if he had ever held that position, the spokesman told The Herald that Arday "was never a visiting professor here".

His biography also describes him as a visiting professor at the Ohio State University in the diversity and inclusion office. The university said it had no record of him being employed, including as a visiting professor. A spokesman said: "The records would not indicate if an individual visited in another, non-employment capacity." The office where he claims to have been a visiting professor closed last year.



On Monday it emerged that Professor Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu, a nanoscientist and the head of Wolfson College, Cambridge, had withdrawn her support for Arday. She had signed an open letter in support of him circulated by the Good Law Project, but her name was removed over the weekend. A number of academics have said that Arday's alleged plagiarism and academic misconduct require serious investigation. Arday has denied academic fraud, saying that he had made mistakes but was not a fantasist. He admitted errors in his work, saying that he was accountable for them but "what I am not is a liar".

He previously told The Times: "I am accountable for the mistakes I've made. I hold myself accountable and other people should hold me accountable. We're talking about academia here.

"I didn't murder somebody. I think the cruelty that I've experienced and the positioning of me as this kind of liar and fantasist is totally unacceptable."

Arday has also been accused of exaggerating parts of his life, including claims that he ran 600 miles in six days and raised more than £5 million for charity. He told The Times that he did not raise all the money but was part of a syndicate of about 100 people, adding that he accepted "responsibility that I could have been really, really explicit" in correcting the narrative.

On Monday the WaterAid charity cast doubt on claims Arday had made about "installing water points" in South America and west Africa, saying that it never sent volunteers abroad.

Claims of plagiarism were investigated by Liverpool John Moores University, which awarded the PhD, and Cambridge University. Neither found any wrongdoing.

Arday was contacted for comment.

A Cambridge professor's brutal unravelling, Times2; letter, page 24

JOSHUA BRATT FOR THE TIMES

Professor Jason Arday has been accused of plagiarism. Left, his memoir

Screen use over summer leaves little to imagination

Andrew Ellson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

A cardboard box could once become a castle, a racing car or a spacecraft. A patch of wasteland was a jungle; the space beneath the dining room table a secret headquarters.

Today, however, confronted by the empty hours of the summer holidays, children are more likely to ask for a screen than use their imagination, according to new research.

Just one in ten children considers going outside to be the first thing to do when bored, the study found, suggesting that the art of inventing games and imaginary worlds is being displaced by phones, tablets and television.

Children are now more than twice as likely to reach for a screen as they are to make up a story or a pretend game. While 28 per cent said that they would ask for or use a device when boredom struck, only 12 per cent would respond by inventing something to play.

The survey of 2,000 children aged four to nine and the same number of parents, which was commissioned by Playmobil, the toy brand, suggests that the shift is also affecting their confidence in their own imaginations.

Fourteen per cent of six-year-olds said that they had already stopped using their imagination, while almost nine in ten children believed that there would come a point when they were too old for pretend games.

Parents, many of whom remember childhood afternoons spent building dens, staging battles with action figures or being told to go out and amuse themselves, fear that something has been lost. The overwhelming majority said that children today had less room to invent their own play while nearly two thirds believed that they had been more imaginative at the same age.

Most parents also reported that at least one toy or activity previously enjoyed by their child had been partly replaced by screens. The concern has already made its way into popular culture. In the latest *Toy Story* film, Woody, Buzz Lightyear and their fellow playthings find themselves competing for a child's attention with Lilypad, a frog-shaped tablet. Yet the findings suggest that children have not entirely lost their appetite for make-believe. Nearly four in ten wish their parents would play pretend games with them more often.

University loses appeal over 'anti-Zionist' academic's dismissal

A university has lost an appeal against an employment tribunal's finding that it discriminated against an academic on the basis of his anti-Zionist beliefs.

David Miller was sacked over comments criticising Israel in October 2021 after a disciplinary hearing at the University of Bristol found he had not met its expected "standards of behaviour".

The lecturer, who had been a professor of political sociology, began employment tribunal proceedings claiming unfair dismissal, breach of contract and discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief.

In 2024 a tribunal found the university had discriminated against Miller based on his anti-Zionist beliefs and that he had been unfairly and wrongfully dismissed. It also found that the amount of compensation he should receive — which has yet to be determined — should be halved because of the "contributory fault" of Miller to his own dismissal, based on comments he had made about Jewish students and student groups on three occasions in 2021.

The tribunal further found that there was a 30 per cent chance he would have been dismissed lawfully by October 2023 in response to social posts made in August that year.

The university appealed against the findings, telling the employment appeal tribunal last November that Miller's anti-Zionist beliefs were political and therefore not protected under the Equality Act. It also argued that the tribunal had wrongly upheld the unfair dismissal claim and that owing to Miller's "contributory fault" his compensation should be waived.

In a ruling yesterday, Lord Fairley, the appeal tribunal president, dismissed most of the appeal, stating that it saw "no good reason why the beliefs relied upon by the claimant in this case should be excluded from protection simply because they related to an issue of social importance which might, broadly, also be categorised as 'political'".

Fairley said the first tribunal's finding that "the discriminatory decision to dismiss also fell outside the band of reasonable responses" was "a legitimate approach that was properly open to it". But the appeals tribunal also ruled that it was "not clear" how the first tribunal had concluded that there was a 30 per cent chance that Miller would have been dismissed lawfully in 2023. This matter was referred back to the tribunal for reconsideration.

Miller also appealed against the decision that it had not been an act of direct discrimination by the university to find him guilty of misconduct, to dismiss his harassment complaint and to reduce his compensation. These were also dismissed by the appeal tribunal.

The academic attracted criticism during a lecture at the university in 2019 when he said the Zionist movement was one of five pillars driving Islamophobia in the UK. The university received a complaint from the Community Security Trust charity, which said his lecture was a "false, vile ... antisemitic slur", but an investigation found Miller had no case to answer.

Then, in February 2021, Miller spoke at an event called Building the Campaign for Free Speech. He made further comments criticising Zionism and questioned how to make sure Zionism was "ended", the appeal tribunal said. He also said it was "fundamental" to Zionism to "encourage Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism".

David Miller described Jewish students as "political pawns"

Miller was accused of antisemitism online, and criticised by Bristol Jewish Society. This led him to call some Jewish student groups "political lobby groups" and to describe Jews studying in the UK as "political pawns by a violent, racist foreign regime engaged in ethnic cleansing". In a subsequent email to a student journalist, he said Zionism "has no place in any society". The comments led to his dismissal.

Specially Selected 100% British Beef Aberdeen Angus Ribeye Steak 8oz, £6.79, £29.91 per kg. Subject to availability. Product and price may vary in store, Scotland, Wales, Aldi Local and online. Photography shows serving suggestion.

Murder suspect posed as jihadist

George Odling Athens

The Afghan boxer accused of murdering a British woman in Athens used a burner phone to text her friends posing as a jihadist who claimed to have killed her because of her Christian faith, it has been reported.

Sharif Ahmadzai, 26, sent the messages to his own wife and other friends of Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, after allegedly dumping her body in a suitcase inside a derelict building, police reportedly told local media. It comes as family members of Alaina Hall, Ahmadzai's wife from Georgia in the US, said her parents were against their marriage.

Hall, a Christian who ran an NGO with her husband in Athens, is said to have given vital evidence to police when she began to suspect Ahmadzai was involved in her friend's death.

Her aunt, Leanne Hall, said her brother Thomas, a 65-year-old pilot, and his wife, Susan, harboured doubts about their daughter's husband before the couple wed.

She told the Daily Mail: "I've never met him, I've only heard about him. But I can tell you my brother and sister-in-law never wanted them to get married."

After allegedly murdering Ross, Ahmadzai is accused of sending a series of messages from her phone to her friends and family before switching it off.

He is then said to have bought another phone and texted friends in Athens, including Hall, to say he was an unnamed jihadist who had killed the Scot because she had been trying to convert people to Christianity, the Greek website Proto Thema reported.

Ahmadzai is accused of stealing Ross's bank cards and withdrawing thousands of euros from her accounts, according to a case file.

Legal papers state that Hall became suspicious of him when she woke in the early hours of July 16 to find he had left the home, then traced him to Ross's accommodation via the Find My Friends app. Ahmadzai had also given her €)2,550 (£2,200) and a new iPhone 17 Pro, which she told police she believed had been bought using money stolen from Ross's bank accounts.

CCTV appears to show a man matching Ahmadzai's description calmly wheeling a large suitcase down a road in Kypseli, near where Ross's body was discovered. Detectives believe that Ross's body had been inside the case.

Sharif Ahmadzai with his American wife Alaina Hall. The Afghan boxer is accused of killing Elisabeth-Jane Ross, above, from Edinburgh

Ahmadzai was later allegedly captured on CCTV making cash withdrawals, police sources said.

He is due to appear before a judge in Athens this morning charged with murder, robbery and illegal possession of a pistol at his home.

Ahmadzai, whose family were all killed by the Taliban, travelled to Greece in 2016 via Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey and met Hall at the Moria migrant camp, where she had been volunteering.

He converted to Christianity in 2017. The couple married in April 2023 and set up a ministry helping refugees in Athens under the name Love Every Nation. Their son was born in April, with Ahmadzai announcing the birth on Facebook as a "blessing straight from the hand of God".

Ahmadzai, a boxer, won a Greek super-lightweight boxing title in March and ran boxing classes to raise money for the NGO.

The couple's website states that his father, a military commander in Kabul, survived six assassination attempts but was shot dead in a Taliban ambush when he was four. Five years later, his older brother was kidnapped by the Taliban and, when he was 15, his mother, brother and sister were killed in a suicide car bomb. The orphaned Ahmadzai had to identify the remains of his siblings, the site claims.

He and Hall are understood to have met Ross, also a Christian volunteer, through their work and police sources said that the Athens flat where the victim was living was linked to the organisation, with Ahmadzai and his wife able to access the property.

Pastor Peter Anderson told worshippers at the City on a Hill church in Edinburgh, where Elisabeth-Jane Ross, known as Lisa, had been a member for 20 years, that her life had been "all about mission". He said her death was a "really tragic loss".

Ross arrived in Athens on June 26, having visited the city most years to volunteer with NGOs and charities. Her body was discovered on July 18.

Anderson said in an online message: "It's been a really tough week for our church. We have lost a precious church member, Lisa. She was a member of our church for 20 years, and a very precious girl, and it was a really tragic loss.

"We have lost a very precious church member, a member who did live their life knowing God, trusting Jesus, knowing that one day they would stand before him, a church member who lived their life with a passion for mission, and so we miss her."

MP protection 'disjointed and patchy'

Ed Halford

Security provisions in place to protect MPs are "disjointed" and "very patchy', according to Robert Buckland KC, who is leading the independent review into the murder of the MP Sir David Amess.

The terms of reference for the review, which was commissioned by the government, were set out by Buckland on Monday in a letter to the Home Office, which was shared with the Amess family.

Amess, who served as the MP for Southend West for 38 years, was stabbed 21 times by Ali Harbi Ali in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, in October 2021.

Amess's family welcomed Buckland leading the review as they said that "he has listened to us and recognised how much has gone wrong". However, Katie Amess, Amess's daughter, said that the family's past few years "have been a long and exhausting struggle".

She said: "We have had to fight for information that should have been given to us as a matter of basic humanity." She said that her family "still do not have the answers we need and the weight of that is indescribable".

In the review, Buckland will seek to "set out clearly the aspects of this incident the Amess family feel remain unaddressed". He will also examine the security provisions for MPs working in their constituencies "to ensure open access to our elected representatives is supported by the best possible security measures for them, their families and their staff".

Katie Amess fought for information after her father David was murdered

The alleged murder of Ann Widdecombe has "focused minds" on this element of the review, Buckland said, and the solicitor Neil Hudgell, who represents the Amess family, said that there is "added urgency to this review given the circumstances of the recent death of Sir David's good friend Ann Widdecombe". Buckland will also examine the life of Ali in the years leading up to Amess's murder and will consider "whether there were any occasions or instances that could or should have given rise to further interventions or follow-ups".

Buckland remains concerned that security for MPs is "very patchy" and the former justice secretary indicated an explanation could be the "very disjointed system between Parliament, the Home Office and the Royalty and Specialist protection branch".

"I just get the feeling that it's all a bit of an alphabet soup out there and while I'm not in the business of creating quangos for quangos' sake I do think that a disjointed approach doesn't seem to me to be up to the threats which are a reality for so many elected officials."

Ali, a fanatic of Islamic State, was given a whole-life sentence for Amess's murder in 2022.

Seven years beforehand, Ali had been referred to Prevent, the government's counter-terrorism programme, but his case was closed.

Reward offered in case of stabbed film-maker

David Brown Chief News Correspondent

A £20,000 reward is being offered by police hunting for a man wanted over the fatal stabbing of Finbar Sullivan, a 21-year-old film-maker.

Sullivan was repeatedly stabbed after taking his new camera to a viewing point in Primrose Hill, a royal park in north London, in April.

Three men from Enfield, north London, have been charged with Sullivan's murder. A fourth man has been charged with grievous bodily harm for an alleged attack on Sullivan's friend, Andrew Egbunike, who required substantial surgery after being stabbed. A trial is scheduled for April next year at the Old Bailey.

Detectives yesterday announced a £20,000 reward for information leading them to trace Jordan Asije, 22, from north London.

Detective Inspector Andy Griffin, who is leading the investigation, said: "We have made significant progress in understanding the events that led to [Sullivan's] tragic death. A reward of up to £20,000 is now being offered to encourage the public to help us."

The officer appealed directly to the wanted man: "Jordan, if you are reading this, I urge you to do the right thing and hand yourself in.

Police are trying to trace Jordan Asije, from north London

"I also want to make it clear that anyone knowingly assisting Jordan ... may be committing a criminal offence."

Sullivan was known for making music videos for drill rap musicians. His father, Christopher, 65, has vowed to dedicate his life to the memory of his only child. Christopher was a founder of Blue Rondo à la Turk, a 1980s band, and the Wag Club in Soho, central London.

News

ANDREW MATTHEWS/PA

High life **Betty Bromage, 97, breaks her own world record for the oldest female wingwalker, near Cirencester, Gloucestershire. It was her sixth wingwalk in ten years**

Hacked hotel wifi warning to travellers

Mark Sellman Technology Correspondent

Travellers have been warned not to trust hotel wifi networks after Russian hackers were discovered to have hijacked them.

Kremlin-linked groups have compromised wifi networks in the US, India and Saudi Arabia to infect computers with spying software and direct users to malicious websites.

Microsoft attributed the campaign, called CaptiveCrunch, to Cozy Bear, a group connected to Russia's foreign intelligence service. ReliaQuest, a cybersecurity company, said the hacking had the hallmarks of Fancy Bear, which is connected to military intelligence.

The hackers compromised the wifi sign-up pages for hotels, conference centres and other organisations. This enabled them to redirect customers to fake websites so they could harvest logins. Wifi users were sent pop-up messages claiming that their web browser needed a "manual update".

The downloaded software could steal passwords, turn on a computer's camera and microphone and steal tokens that gave hackers access to networks without needing codes.

Travellers are advised to use a virtual private network or VPN to connect to the internet or to use mobile hotspots.

Made in Britain: Ukrainian drone boats

Charlie Parker

Drone boats that have decimated Russia's Black Sea Fleet are being built in Britain to help the Royal Navy combat Kremlin warships, submarines and shadow fleet tankers.

Uforce, a Ukrainian defence firm whose kamikaze sea drones have destroyed more than a dozen Russian warships, unveiled a new vessel yesterday designed to help "make Britain a naval superpower again".

The MV7 was launched for the first time last month from an undisclosed location off the UK's south coast.

Modelled on Ukraine's famous "Magura" unmanned surface vessels (USVs), which are used for the vast majority of maritime attacks against Russian targets, it can conduct strikes and reconnaissance missions at long range across the Atlantic. The firm, now headquartered in London, says it combined the expertise of frontline drone operators and British Formula 1 engineers to adapt the vessels for warfare on more challenging ocean waters.

Oleg Rogynskyy, chief executive of Uforce, told The Times that the firm branched out to the UK after "sinking pretty much everything there was to sink" in the Black Sea.

Months after Russia launched its full-scale invasion, Ukrainian forces had destroyed the fleet's flagship, Moskva, and forced the navy into a full retreat using homegrown anti-ship missiles and USVs.

Sir Richard Knighton, head of the UK armed forces, yesterday praised Ukraine for showing "how a country without a navy can, through creative and courageous use of maritime drones, neutralise the mighty Russian Black Sea Fleet".

Rogynskyy said the Ukrainian government supported Uforce's expansion into western markets. After establishing offices in the UK three years ago, the firm began developing the MV7 from scratch to meet the different needs of the Royal Navy and its Nato partners.

The tasks these vessels must perform are "100 times more complicated" than the one-way strikes typically carried out by Ukrainian forces in the Black Sea, Rogynskyy said. MV7s must be more reusable and able to stay at sea for weeks as they carry out a variety of missions. These include hunting submarines and protecting undersea cables and windfarms from sabotage.

One of their chief roles with the Royal Navy could involve intercepting Russian warships or sanctioned Shadow Fleet oil tankers that enter British waters, Rogynskyy added. MV7 sea drones would work best deployed in swarms, each equipped with different capabilities. One could be armed with 600kg of C4 explosives, while another is equipped with a suite of sensors.

Rogynskyy argued that "the only way the UK becomes a maritime superpower again" is by bolstering the fleet with "a large volume of uncrewed autonomous vessel systems".

In March, Uforce announced that it had launched globally alongside a $50 million seed funding round, which it described as the largest for a defence start-up in the UK. The company said that the investment values the firm at more than $1 billion.

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May the force be Cymru

***A boed i'r Grym fod gyda chi*. It may not have the same ring to it as "may the force be with you", but soon Welsh-speaking Star Wars fans will be able to watch the film in their own language (Alex Farber writes).**

***Star Wars: Gobaith Newydd*, or *Star Wars: A New Hope*, will be broadcast on the Welsh-language channel S4C on Christmas Day.**

Matthew Rhys, who starred in the Netflix thriller *The Beast in Me*, will voice Han Solo in the dubbed version. Aimee-Ffion Edwards, who has appeared in *Peaky Blinders* and *Slow Horses*, plays Princess Leia.

Other Welsh actors in the cast include Rhys Ifans as Obi-Wan Kenobi, Osian Morgan as Luke Skywalker and Mark Lewis Jones, who featured in *The Last Jedi*, as Darth Vader.

The project was produced by Disney and Lucasfilm, whose co-president Lynwen Brennan was born and raised in Wales, with the Welsh government.

Brennan said Welsh was a "beautiful, lyrical language" that she hoped would take viewers back. "We have never before had a translation of Star Wars into Welsh and I am so thankful, that in celebration of [the franchise's upcoming] 50th anniversary, we have been able to work with some incredible Welsh talent to make that a reality," she said. "Welsh speakers will finally be able to enjoy the film in our native language and my hope is that it will have the same emotional impact as if you were watching the film again for the first time."

The Welsh version of A New Hope features voice acting from Matthew Rhys (Han Solo), Aimee Ffion-Edwards (Princess Leia) and Osian Morgan (Luke Skywalker)

Rhun ap Iorwerth, the first minister of Wales, said *Star Wars* was one of the most influential films of his childhood. "Its appeal shows no sign of waning, captivating audiences to this day," he said. "To see a Welsh language version of this iconic film, using the talents of some of our best actors, is fantastic.

It is not the only link between Wales and the films. A full Millennium Falcon spaceship was built at Pembroke Dock in 1979 for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. Scenes from the 2024 TV series *Star Wars: The Acolyte* were shot on Welsh sites including the Brecon Beacons.

Star Wars films have been dubbed into more than 50 languages. In 2024, *A New Hope* was translated into Ojibwe, an indigenous language spoken by the people of the same name in North America. The community hoped that it would help to preserve their language, spoken in the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Ontario, and the US state of Minnesota.

In the previous year a study by the Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany found that people routinely used words such as Yoda, Jedi, Padawan and lightsaber, and talk about turning to the "dark side" when doing something bad. All of these words have been included in the Oxford English Dictionary, starting with Yoda in 2016.

Geraint Evans, chief executive of S4C, said the "stars had aligned" for the project. "It's a fantastic opportunity to promote the Welsh language and our talented actors on an international stage," he said. "It also compliments our strategy to expand our viewing through remarkable content and our desire to help produce cinematic films in Welsh."

Strictly judge was slashed on Spain trip

Peter Chappell

The *Strictly Come Dancing* judge Craig Revel Horwood has described being attacked with a razor blade and robbed while on holiday as a young man.

Horwood, 61, was in Madrid when he was robbed for his jewellery. Speaking on his *Judgemental* podcast with his co-host and fellow BBC show judge Anton Du Beke, he discussed his time in the Spanish capital when he was 23.

Horwood said: "I went on holiday in Madrid and got stabbed, that was nice, and it was stinking hot. My jewellery was stolen as well, they ripped my necklace off my neck and gave me a big burn mark.

Craig Revel Horwood was also robbed of his necklace during the attack

"It was a razor blade ... I was slashed... [in the] stomach coming home from a club, it was probably two o'clock in the morning, but that's sort of normal, you go out for dinner at 10 or 11.

"But I remember I was dancing at the Lido in Paris, and we went to Madrid for a holiday, so that ended up pretty bad."

Horwood added: "And then when I got back, I got strip-searched. I hadn't shaved, so I did look a bit of a wreck, I'd been stabbed, I had burn marks all around my neck from where I was attacked. And then the French strip-searched me down to literally nothing ... they were looking for drugs."

Clangers and Bagpuss lots raise £400k

Artwork by Peter Firmin, co-creator of *Bagpuss* and *Clangers*, sold at auction for more than £400,000.

About 500 paintings, books and collectibles by the British puppeteer went under the hammer and every lot was sold during a two-day event held by Canterbury Auction Galleries.

It was the largest collection of Firmin's art to come to auction and most of the pieces sold for well over their estimated values. A signed painting of Basil Brush chatting to a mole fetched £6,000. Its estimate was £120 to £160.

A number of colour paintings of Clangers, the knitted aliens of a mysterious planet, also featured in the collection. An illustration of Tiny Clanger in the iron chicken's nest sold for £3,900.

Artworks from the animated series *Noggin the Nog* also went under the hammer. They included an illustration of the villain Nogbad the Bad firing a cannon at the Ice Dragon, which fetched £4,200.

Other works included a mechanical model of Gabriel the Toad from *Bagpuss*, which sold for £4,200, and a painting of Bagpuss himself with his friends Emily and Professor Yaffle the woodpecker, which fetched £1,600.

Firmin, who died in 2018, co-founded the production company Smallfilms with the puppeteer Oliver Postgate. Their first big hit was in 1959 with *Ivor The Engine*. The first hand-drawn comic strip of the locomotive sold for £940.

Gallery citizens don't know their art from their elbow, say critics

Ed Halford

The National Gallery is spending £250,000 to invite members of the public with no artistic experience to advise on the gallery's future, in a move branded "barking mad" by art insiders.

The citizens' assembly, called NG Citizens, began late last year. The gallery became the first major museum in the UK to allow members of the public, who may not necessarily have art expertise or may have never visited it, to influence its decision-making.

The assembly, which is made up of 50 people from the UK aged 16 and over, was selected by the Sortition Foundation via a civic lottery. This process included sending out invitations to 15,000 households and forming a group reflecting "the wide diversity of the UK, including individuals who have never engaged with the gallery before".

Responsibilities of assembly members include suggesting "changes needed to meet the challenges of the future" and bringing new ideas on "how to implement and build on existing plans for the future of the gallery".

The members do not have any influence over the buying or selling of paintings or ideas that would result in significant changes to existing buildings. In its first year, the assembly met five times.

Michael Daley, 82, the director of ArtWatch UK, who has scrutinised the work of the National Gallery since 1963, called the assembly "barking mad". He compared its implementation to a "greengrocer commissioning a very, very expensive investigation to tell him what vegetables to sell".

Daley added: "It's much more likely to be a kind of pre-emptive wheeze to find a justification for the sorts of things they would like to do anyway."

Sir Gabriele Finaldi, the director of the National Gallery, told The Times: "As custodians of a national collection, we are proud of the pioneering role NG Citizens has played in supporting our core mission of bringing people and paintings together. While our curatorial, research and programming expertise is at the centre of what we do, we think it is important to grow our relationship with audiences across the UK."

The cost of the project has also been queried by Charlie Dewhirst, a Conservative MP, after Ian Murray, a culture minister, told the Commons "the total budgeted cost for their citizen assembly is expected to be £250,000 over five years from 2025 to 2029".

Dewhirst told The Times that he had "concerns" about the direction of the National Gallery given its focus on input from citizens who do not necessarily have any qualifications in assessing art. He said: "I think it's really important that those involved in the National Gallery should be the leading experts in the country on art and therefore making decisions on behalf of those who go to the gallery. What we need to showcase is not always your Van Goghs but also other important artists from across the centuries and generations and I don't think a citizens' assembly is best placed to do this." He said the citizens' assembly evoked wider fears about whether this was part of a larger project to "push away traditionalism".

The Sortition Foundation is also campaigning to replace the House of Lords with a House of Citizens.

Daley, who has called for the trustees to step aside, said the assembly gave support to the idea that "everything has to be made to sound or seem, if not actually be, progressive" in the art world.

Greater input from the public has been tested elsewhere. In 2024 the Birmingham Museums Trust established the first museum citizens' jury, which brought together 26 randomly selected residents to deliberate on the future role of the city's cultural spaces.

News

New reservoir drained as farms struggle to avoid worst harvest

Ben Cooke Environment Correspondent

Drought conditions have forced farmers in Suffolk to drain a £3 million mega-reservoir, as Britain's harvest looks set to be the worst on record.

The manager of the 22,500-acre Elveden Estate in Suffolk has had to use almost 200 Olympic swimming pools worth of water to stop his crops failing — nearly emptying an enormous reservoir completed just last year.

Andrew Blenkiron, the managing director at the farm which grows onions, potatoes and carrots for McDonald's, said the summer months had been "incredibly testing".

He added it was "going to be tight" to keep his crops watered from boreholes and two other reservoirs, both of which are also nearly empty.

"This is the third year out of five we've experienced these conditions and the big danger is if we have a dry winter, we've got some really serious problems next year. It really is going to take a lot of rain to make any significant difference."

This summer's exceptionally dry weather has plunged half of England into drought, dramatically downgrading expectations for this year's harvest.

When Blenkiron completed his cereal harvest in July, his winter barley yields were 30 per cent lower than average.

JAMES LINSELL CLARK/SWNS

The £3m basin on the Elveden Estate in Suffolk, run by Andrew Blenkiron, left, is running out of water

With 54 per cent of wheat fields now harvested across Britain, farmers are on course to produce 19.4 million tonnes of cereal and oilseed crops — four million tonnes less than the average since records began in 1984, and 400,000 less than 2020, the worst harvest on record.

"We're used to dealing with a lack of water and whatever Mother Nature throws at us," he added.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's latest forecast suggests the cereal harvest will be 2.5 million tonnes smaller than expected in the spring.

Analysts at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), a think tank, estimate this will cost farmers as much as £390 million.

Unless yields pick up as the harvest continues, 2026 looks set to overtake 2020 as the worst harvest on record.

Even if yields do pick up, this year will probably have one of the five worst harvests on record — all but one of which will have occurred since 2020.

Martin Lines, a cereal farmer from Cambridgeshire and the chief executive of the Nature Friendly Farming Network, described this year's harvest as a "real kick in the teeth".

"After two terrible harvests in a row, the crops this year were looking good and full of potential coming out of spring, only for months of drought and heatwaves to destroy any prospect of a decent harvest.

"Even farmers I know who were sceptical of climate change are saying they're really worried about the future of their businesses and production."

A study by Imperial College London found June's 38C heatwave was "unequivocally" caused by climate change.

Tom Lancaster, a farming analyst at ECIU, said: "Farming is now the sector most exposed to climate change and the risks and damage that it brings.

"We are in danger of UK farming entering a climate doom loop, as repeated impacts undermine the capacity of farmers to drill next year's crop. Our green and pleasant land is transforming into a parched and increasingly unproductive one."

Neighbour killed fish in row over pond noise

Lowri Lewis

A pensioner used motor oil and detergent to kill his neighbour's koi carp and destroy a water pump out of "sheer frustration and lack of sleep", a court has heard.

Gerry Duffy, 76, from north London, was "driven completely insane" by the sound of a water pump running his neighbour's fishpond.

Duffy had warned Andreas Ptohides that he would take matters into his own hands if he did not do something about the noise.

The retired builder pleaded guilty to damaging the pond, fish, water pump and pipes in March on the day of his trial at Willesden magistrates' court in London.

Shahid Iftakhar, for the prosecution, told the court Duffy had killed "five or six" of Ptohides's koi carp and potentially caused £565 of damage.

"The defendant has previously complained to the complainant about noise coming from his garden and has said words to the effect of, 'If you didn't deal with it, I would' — there was a warning before the incident," he said.

Iftakhar added that Duffy was captured on CCTV having "climbed into the complainant's garden and damaged the water pipes and pumps".

Elliott Stern, for the defence, said his client had tried to deal with the dispute without resorting to killing the fish.

"The man has been driven completely insane by this noise, he's spoken to the complainant several times," he said. "They initially said they would stop the water pump going but then turned around and said that's not good for the fish."

An environmental officer came to the house and told Duffy he either had to "move or close his window", the court heard. "Out of sheer frustration and lack of sleep, Mr Duffy, out of character, I would say, lost his mind and committed various damages," said Stern.

Duffy, who pleaded guilty to three counts of damaging property and one count of unlawfully destroying fish, was handed a two year conditional discharge. He was also ordered to pay £565 of compensation to Ptohides.

Pilot's escape a miracle, says uncle

Shayma Bakht, John Siddle
Anthee Carassava Athens

The family of a British pilot who survived a helicopter crash in Greece while fighting wildfires have told of his "miraculous" escape seconds before it exploded.

Andrew Hutchinson, 48, was named by relatives as a survivor of the collision between two helicopters 40 miles west of Athens. A Danish pilot and a Greek fire service liaison officer were killed.

Hutchinson is an aerial firefighter and runs a helicopter business in Northallerton, North Yorkshire,.

Speaking to The Times from Northallerton, Michael Hutchinson, uncle of Andrew, described his survival as "miraculous", adding: "There's not many other pilots who could have landed that helicopter without the rotors."

Footage of the collision appeared to show one Bell helicopter rising beneath the other before striking its rotor blades. One aircraft burst into flames and fell into a ravine, while the other descended rapidly. The helicopter is believed to have crashed in dense woodland without power, and Hutchinson told his family that he and the Greek fire co-ordinator travelling with him, escaped before it caught fire.

Andrew Hutchinson "crashed badly" and is now recovering after surgery

His uncle said: "He crashed badly in the wood and managed to get out just in time. His phone was all burnt up. He left that behind. He and the officer who was with him got out just before the helicopter exploded."

Hutchinson, who has three children, is recovering in Athens from surgery for a back injury. He is expected to be flown back to the UK shortly.

Michael Hutchinson, 74, said: "I was up with him once when he was learning and he performed autorotation [where an helicopter is landed without power]. He said, 'I'll just switch the engine off'. I said, 'What?' And he came down and landed it with no engine.

"He's been flying helicopters for a long, long time. He's a really careful lad. He knows what he is doing."

Hutchinson, who comes from a farming family, taught himself to fly after deciding unexpectedly to pursue a career in aviation. His uncle recalled him announcing that he was travelling to London for a medical examination.

He said: "I thought he must be getting his HGV licence. He said, 'No, I'm going to learn how to fly helicopters.' And he did. He paid for it all himself."

Asked whether the collision would stop his nephew flying, he replied: "No. He won't stop. Nothing would stop him."

Four held over 'atrocious' large-scale waste dumping

Four men have been arrested over "atrocious" large-scale dumping of waste at a site in Wigan, Greater Manchester, the Environment Agency said.

Residents near the Bolton House Road site have had to endure bad smells, while a fire caused schools to close last summer, officials said.

Two men, 41 and 35 from Wigan, a man from Leeds, 24 and Liverpool, 59, were arrested for environmental, fraud and money laundering offences.

The 24-year-old man from Leeds was also arrested over waste dumping at the Cave's Inn Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest near Shawell, Leicestershire, the Environment Agency said.

A 58-year-old man from the Birmingham area was previously arrested in May in connection with illegal waste dumping at the site.

Andy Burnham pledged organised waste crime would not be ignored on his watch, as he said families had had to live with an ocean of rubbish and were unable to escape the smells from the tip.

The government has announced it will directly fund the clean-up of the Bolton House Road site and the entrance has been blocked with concrete blocks to prevent more waste dumped.

Wigan council is looking to recruit a specialist contractor for the clear-up.

Officers from Greater Manchester, Lancashire, and West Yorkshire police, working in support of the Environment Agency, whose National Environmental Crime Unit is leading the investigation, secured the arrests. After the arrests, Burnham said: "Today's action by the Environment Agency and the police is just the start. The days of making easy money ... are over."

Dame Angela Eagle, environment secretary, said: "The appalling dumping of waste at Bolton House Road and Cave's Inn Pits represents a blatant disregard for local communities."

TMS

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Big beasts of the depths

When the swimmers in Highgate Pond go for a morning dip, they have become used to spotting all sorts of species from the Labour Party menagerie. There is the *Minister Furiosus*, otherwise known as Ed Miliband, whose swimming style, I am reliably told, is a bizarre cross between breaststroke and doggy paddle. This spectacle has been enough to make onlookers choke on their bacon sandwiches, though perhaps that is in tribute to the man himself. Now, another specimen has appeared on the scene. The lesser-spotted Peter Mandelson (*Princeps Tenebrarum*), above, has started taking to the 24C water. In comparison to Miliband, Mandy's swimming style has been likened to that of an eel, a creature that is slippery, elusive and prone to biting when provoked.

UNRESTRAINED MOGGLETS

As my child gets older and bigger, I find myself taking parenting advice from an experienced if unusual source. "What did you do for car seats?" I ask the former Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg, father of six, as I

suspect that his Rolls-Royce was not set up for an Isofix arrangement. Indeed, when the Mogglets were particularly small, their father was forced to forsake his favourite motors and instead use the Land Rover, which provided the requisite safety features. However, when the children reached sufficient size, he found a legal loophole. "If you drive an old car which was made without seatbelts then they can sit in the back," he said. "This saves a lot of time." I look forward to telling my wife that a classic Bentley would pass a cost-benefit analysis.

There has been some criticism of Andy Burnham for taking a holiday after spending only two weeks as PM, but breaks are important and it's not like he wasn't working hard before he took the top job. As Lee Harpin of Jewish News remarked: "Of course Burnham deserves a holiday — he's been working on the PM role for at least 18 months."

HARMAN'S MAN PROBLEM

As Labour continue to struggle to appoint a female leader, their former deputy head Harriet Harman thinks it's time for extreme measures. "Men cannot stand for the leadership next time," she said, adding that she will be asking any rising star among Labour's male MPs to defer their ambition. The latter part seems optimistic, given that at least one young Labour man already postponed his leadership dreams only last month. There is another problem with Harman's no-male rule. It is banned by the 2010 Equality Act, a piece of legislation introduced by one H. Harman.

Amid the tributes to Rod Liddle, I received one story from a former Spectator staffer that captured the columnist's unique sense of humour. When Liddle submitted his copy late, he knew this was an inconvenience for the lackey who had to edit it. So Liddle conjured an excuse that at least gave them a line to dine out on. "Sorry my copy's late, mate," he said. "I had an argument with my girlfriend about whether I'm a genius or not."

JACK BLACKBURN

Science gets to gut of how life erupted

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

Scientists have identified a neglected force behind one of the most important events in the history of the Earth: a "faecal revolution" that took place 540 million years ago and helped shape animal life as we know it.

According to a study, the revolution involved rising quantities of excrement being released into ancient oceans by some of the earliest creatures.

In turn, the scientists argue, this played a key yet largely unappreciated role in fuelling the Cambrian explosion, a comparatively brief period in which life became dramatically more complex and most groups of animals seen today began to appear in the fossil record.

Predators, scavengers and animals with hard shells became more common, food chains grew more elaborate and the architecture of many modern ecosystems began to emerge.

To explain this transformation scientists have often looked to rising oxygen levels in the seas, but the study argues that another factor has been hiding in plain sight — or, more accurately, preserved in ancient rocks.

The research, published in Trends in Ecology & Evolution, examined fossilised excrement, known as coprolites.

The first animals appeared about 600 million years ago, during what is known as the Ediacaran period, but convincing evidence of complete digestive systems is scarce and no confirmed coprolites are known from this time. In the Cambrian, however, fossilised faeces appear. The study notes that they then become progressively larger, more varied and more widespread. Its authors trace a chain of events in which animals developed more complex guts and produced increasing amounts of waste. This would have carried organic matter and nutrients into deeper ocean waters, allowing life to flourish in regions that were previously barren.

This helped to create conditions in which larger and more complex animals could thrive. They, in turn, produced more waste, establishing a feedback loop that gave rise to still more complex creatures and food chains.

"Next to rising oxygen levels and other contributing factors, the importance of faeces in ancient ecosystems is often overlooked," said Dr Russell Bicknell, an evolutionary biologist at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia.

The researchers reviewed evidence from 36 deposits around the world, including sites in Australia, China and North America. They range from microscopic pellets to coprolites several centimetres across. Their increasing size and variety coincides with the development of more efficient digestive systems.

The results of the "explosion of excrement" are visible today. In modern oceans, pellets of faecal matter are part of a mechanism that carries organic carbon and nutrients from sunlit surface waters into deeper parts of the sea.

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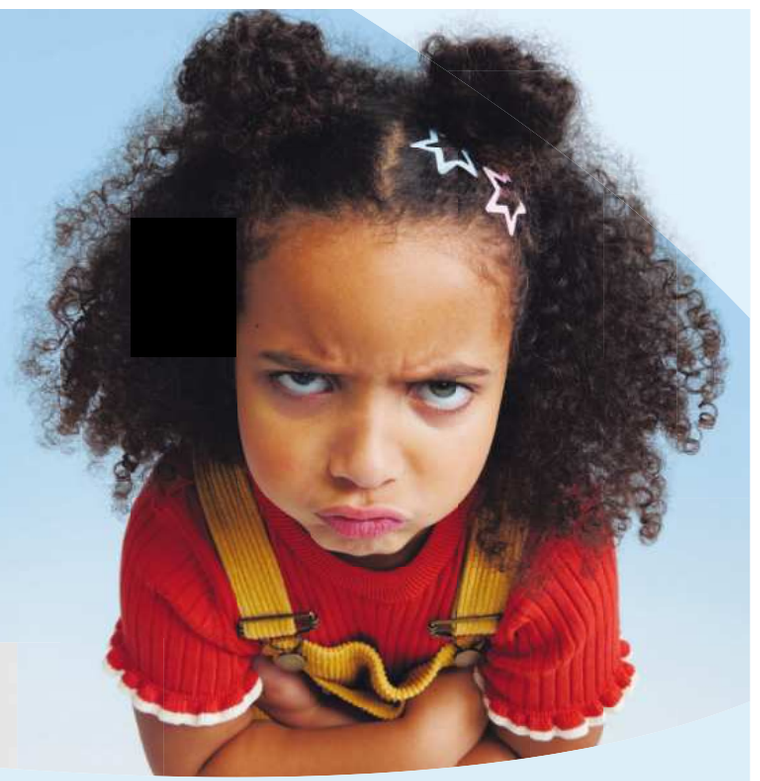

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DAVID DAVIES/PA

All at sea Anything Goes has an authentic nautical backdrop at the open-air Minack Theatre in Porthcurno, Cornwall

Ofsted goes after illegal care homes for children

Business partners have been fined for failing to register their company, write **Sanchez Manning** and **Matthew Young**

Rita Ora, Damian Marley and the Jamaican reggae duo Chaka Demus and Pliers are just some of the artists that Davidson Lynch-Shyllon, a musician and children's care home boss, claims to have worked with.

Lynch-Shyllon, a songwriter and producer who uses the stage name Silvastone, describes in his online professional profile how he combines his "passion for music" with a dedication to working with young people.

"In addition to my music career, I have been deeply involved in supporting and nurturing young people," he writes.

However, despite his self-declared good intentions, Lynch-Shyllon, 44, alongside his business partner Miriam Ekhator, 47, has been fined more than £100,000 for illegally running unregistered residential children's homes.

Their case marks the first criminal prosecution of its kind by Ofsted, which regulates children's services.

The pair, who ran the company Catalyst Care, received repeated letters from Ofsted warning that they were breaking the law by not registering their children's homes, but they continued to operate without registering.

Between 2022 and 2025 the homes received more than £1.8 million for child placements from councils in Kent.

Lynch-Shyllon and Ekhator admitted to ten charges of operating unregistered children's homes housing nine children between 2022 and 2025 at Croydon magistrates' court, south London, in March.

Yesterday they were fined £92,400 and ordered to pay victim surcharges totalling £2,960 and costs of £17,250. The pair were also disqualified from managing or having a financial interest in a children's home.

Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's chief inspector, said that the outcome sent "a clear message that operating outside the law will have consequences".

Catalyst Care describes itself on its website as "a private accommodation and support provider". It claims to be led by "a dedicated team with over 30 years of combined experience in social care".

During the hearing, the court was told that the firm's turnover had risen from £190,000 in 2021 to £955,000 in 2024. Lynch-Shyllon and Ekhator received dividends of £193,000 each over the course of the charge period.

Daisy Wrigley, for the prosecution, said during the sentencing hearing: "We do not know where that £1.8 million [received from councils] went."

However, Musa Raji, in mitigation, said that the partners had suffered a "financial collapse". Ekhator now lives on universal credit and Lynch-Shyllon earns about £1,500 a month, aside from occasional income from his music, the court was told.

Raji said that the fees charged by the company to councils were standard for children with complex needs, including some cases where four carers were required for one child.

Judge Sushil Kumar noted that both offenders were of good character and had received "glowing" references from children they had cared for and from parents.

The case related to three properties in Kent. One neighbour living next to one of their homes, in a run-down and deprived area, recalled Lynch-Shyllon and Ekhator being "a nuisance".

"I didn't get the impression that they lived there — but they were in and out of the house constantly," she said. "He would turn up during the middle of the night and speak loudly on his Bluetooth speaker while he just sat in his car."

Lynch-Shyllon told The Times that he and Ekhator did attempt to register their care facilities with Ofsted.

He said: "They [Ofsted] haven't come back to us for 23 months. We had letters from judges, from courts, that asked us to look after young people and because of the amount of work we were bamboozled by it all."

Lynch-Shyllon said that he and Ekhator were led to believe that they were allowed to care for young people.

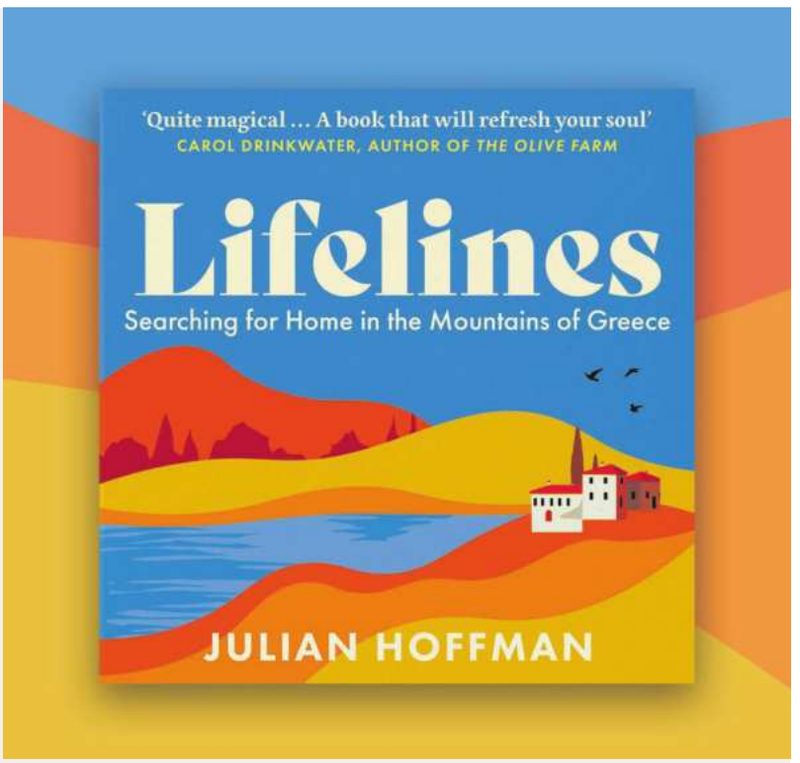
"Medway council gave us written confirmation that you can look after these people for 28 days," he said. "We did that under the understanding that it was OK."

He insisted: "We didn't decide to do this as some kind of get-rich-quick scheme. We have untold numbers of young people that came through our homes who are still contacting us today for help. But they [the local authorities] used us and now they've literally thrown us under the bus. It's not like we're an illegal home putting kids in caravans or something like that."

Ofsted confirmed that Catalyst Care attempted to register a children's home in 2023 and another in 2025, but the applications were incomplete.

Medway council, which worked with Catalyst Care from 2021-22, said that it repeatedly advised the company to register with Ofsted.

Davidson Lynch-Shyllon claimed that he had been "thrown under the bus"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Singer's 60ft robot has spooky encore

A 60ft tall robot that appeared on stage during a Take That tour has been spooking passers-by after it was abandoned among the shrubbery at Robbie Williams's former home (Lowri Lewis writes).

Williams left the animatronic figure behind when he sold his Wiltshire mansion in the village of Compton Bassett, near Calne, in 2022. Recently, the "creepy fella" has been spotted lurking in the trees near a road on the edge of the property.

The mechanical man, named Om, was the centrepiece of Take That's stage set, which cost £15 million, for their 2011 Progress Live tour. As tall as four double-deckers, it was used to lower band members on to the stage at Wembley and the City of Manchester stadium on its giant palms.

Lately, however, the huge figure has been "freaking out" passers-by in Wiltshire. Kristina Bowen, who spotted it as she was driving home, said: "Something caught my eye. I thought, 'What's that?' I've driven up and down that road many times and have never spotted it before.

"So I stopped the car and there he was — this giant humanoid sitting in among the trees, looking down into the field."

Others described on a local Facebook group how they had been shocked by the sight of the robot, which made them think they were seeing things.

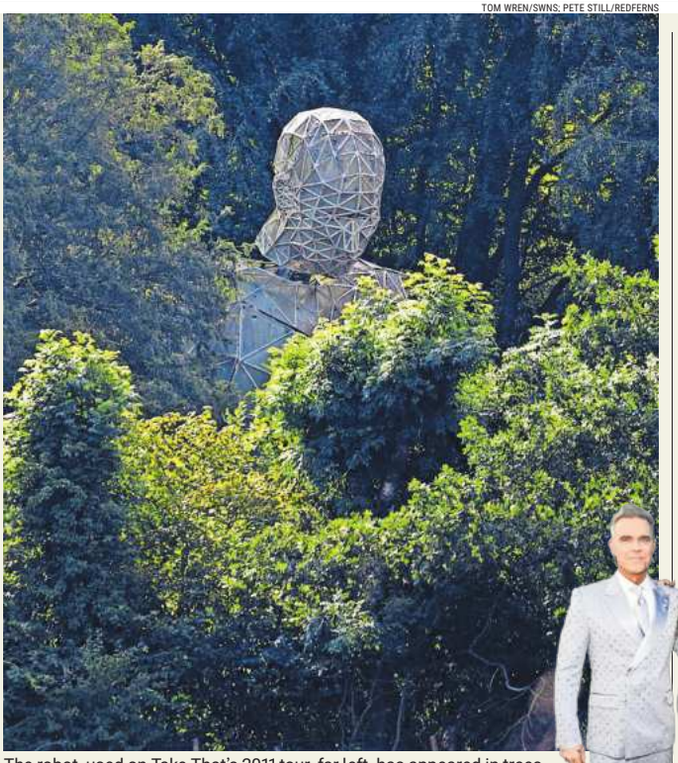
Sarah Spencer said: "When I first saw it I had to turn around and go back to see what I thought I'd seen. It must be as big as a house. It caught me completely off guard but I was intrigued."

Liz Neve, a fellow resident, added: "It's [in] such a perfect location as it just seems to emerge from nowhere — and then as you drive alongside it, it seems to withdraw back into the foliage," she wrote. "But I was concerned that the locals might be building up to a re-enactment of the Wicker Man."

Williams bought the seven-bedroom mansion and its surrounding 71 acres in 2008 for about £8.1 million and lived in it in 2009. He then moved back to Los Angeles and he sold the property in 2022.

Take That's 2011 sell-out tour was the first time the group had toured as a five-piece since 1995. On one date in Manchester Mark Owen and Howard Donald became trapped in the palms of Om after its mechanics failed and they had to be rescued using ladders.

It is thought that Williams had intended for Om to be taken to his home in LA. It is unclear how it ended up on public view.



The robot, used on Take That's 2011 tour, far left, has appeared in trees near a road in Wiltshire. Right: Robbie Williams and his wife, Ayda Field

Hackers steal data of 1,000 charities

Mark Sellman Technology Correspondent

Up to 1,000 charities including English National Ballet and Historic Buildings and Palaces have had their data stolen by hackers.

The cyberattack targeted Beacon CRM, which supplies customer management software to the charity sector.

The hackers breached Beacon's systems by using stolen login details and targeted the company's back-up databases, which were copied.

The breach was discovered last Wednesday and customers were notified on Monday.

Victims of the attack included Upper Room, a west London homeless charity, the Jersey branch of the cancer charity Macmillan and Chiswick House and Gardens Trust.

Historic Buildings and Places, formerly the Ancient Monuments Society, said that Beacon "has advised all of its customers ... to work on the basis that the information they hold may have been affected". The charity told its members that the stolen information may include "your name, contact details, communication preferences, membership or donation history, Gift Aid records, event bookings, correspondence or notes relating to your relationship with us, and, for some individuals, gender and date of birth information". No payment or financial information was compromised, it said.

Victims were advised to change their passwords and be vigilant for any scam emails or text messages that could contain malicious links.

English National Ballet said that some business contact information, including email addresses, phone numbers and addresses was likely to have been taken, but not passwords or payment information.

Beacon says on its website that it has 1,000 clients in the charity sector, including Girlguiding, Kidney Care UK and smaller animal rescue, health and sports charities. It said in a statement: "Late last week we became aware that we may have experienced a cybersecurity incident. We immediately engaged external cybersecurity experts to help us investigate and secure our systems.

"Our current understanding is that compromised credentials were used to gain access to Beacon, and copies of our database backups were made. Whilst the exfiltration [copying or taking] of this data hasn't yet been confirmed, the evidence we have so far suggests these copies were likely downloaded."

Beacon, which is based in London, was founded in 2017 by two software engineers, Chris Houghton and David Simpson, to help charities get the most out of their databases.

Breaching an organisation through stolen logins is a common entry for hackers and suggests that there was a failure of multi-factor authentication or of monitoring credentials. Hackers typically target back-up data because this often has weaker protection than production systems. Beacon carries cybersecurity certifications on its website, including Cyber Essentials Plus, a government-backed credential.

Alan Woodward, professor of cybersecurity at Surrey University, said: "This incident shows how a single set of compromised credentials can expose an entire supply chain, with hundreds of charities now carrying the regulatory burden for a breach that occurred in their supplier's systems. The lesson for any organisation holding sensitive donor or beneficiary data is that credential hygiene, mandatory multi-factor authentication, and strict controls on backup access are baseline requirements, not optional extras."

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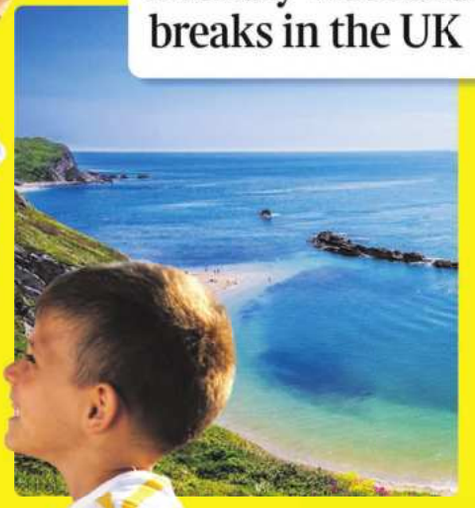

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Ariana Grande's image is a danger to girls
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Comment

Britain has a problem with wealth creation

Activist Gary Stevenson's call for more taxes on the rich is ill-founded and misleading but it's a view shared by many

James Kanagasooriam

Britain's super-rich enjoyed a rare recent slice of good news. Gary Stevenson, the former City trader and inequality activist bent on making them pay more tax, has quit. At least, he's stepping back from weekly YouTube videos after a bruising Channel 4 encounter where he was challenged on his case for a wealth tax.

They shouldn't celebrate too soon. The number of millionaires fell by 7 per cent last year to the lowest level since the 2008 financial crisis, according to the Adam Smith Institute, with many Britons cheering them out of the country. More than a third of voters (36 per cent) say the UK would be fine, or better off, with fewer millionaires, according to polling by my firm, Focaldata. That includes about a quarter of Conservative and Reform voters. Among voters for parties of the left, "making the wealthiest pay even more tax" ranked as the third most popular thing Andy Burnham could do, after cutting NHS waiting lists and slicing the cost of essentials such as electricity, gas and food.

Nick Clegg observed on the radio that "there's now almost no party that appears viscerally on the side of wealth creators". Britain, it appears, has a problem with wealth — even though it is high earners who bear the lion's share of the tax burden. The top 10 per cent of income-tax payers paid 60 per cent of all income tax, according to the House of Commons library this year. In 2023, the top 1 per cent earned 13 per cent of pre-tax income and paid 29 per cent of income tax.

Looking at the public opinion data there are two drivers of anti-rich sentiment of the kind Stevenson was trying to tap into. First, the sense that the rich and the businesses they own have acted illegitimately, whether morally or legally. Second, that ordinary people do not see a pathway to join the ranks of the wealthy.

Although not currently in the headlines, public anger over multinational tax avoidance has had a long half-life in Britain. Voters do not like companies that extract wealth without appearing to generate it. Private equity's entry into nursery schools and care homes strikes many as unproductive and callous. But there is also public scepticism about who has become wealthy in the past two decades: consultants and lawyers engaged in endless Kafkaesque consultations

> In the US, ordinary jobs can command extraordinary wages

and processes designed by consultants and lawyers; or entrepreneurs whose businesses are built on mass outsourcing. This is to say nothing of the declining reputation of the tech sector, which has made capitalism's invisible hand hard to discern.

The harsh truth is that many of Britain's winners are not seen by large sections of the public as doing admirable or productive work that will enrich the country. Many do not see the connection between the enrichment of specific groups of people and the improvement of their own lives and incomes. Combine this with how separate Britain's rich can seem from everyone else and you can see why public opinion doesn't reflect the arithmetical case for the rich.

In 2024, the Jobs Foundation surveyed attitudes towards big business on both sides of the Atlantic and showed how bad the problem is. Just 36 per cent of the British public think large businesses play a positive role in the economy, compared with 52 per cent in America.

Those dry numbers reflect a brutal transatlantic reality. If I went to a regional Walmart summer barbecue, the local manager, many of the supervisors and some regional head-office staff could well be millionaires by virtue of higher American wages and ballooning pension pots. An equivalent gathering of Tesco staff would not be such fertile millionaire territory. The US is a place where ordinary jobs can command extraordinary wages. It has more people in regular-sounding occupations — think of the plumber with dozens of contractors or the car dealer with ten showrooms instead of one — who become millionaires. Wealth creation is more socially accessible. Britain is trending the other way.

Many analysts elide our attitudes towards wealth with the trope of widening inequality. This is simply not true. Wages are being compressed. The Low Pay Commission estimates that the adult minimum wage equalled 68 per cent of median hourly pay in April 2026, its highest ever level. It exceeds 80 per cent of local median pay in Doncaster, Wigan and Sunderland, according to the Centre for Cities. This certainly removes incentives to getting ahead.

There are also questions as to why, as a society, we don't care more about wage growth among middle

CHRISTOPHER L PROCTOR FOR THE TIMES

Gary Stevenson was challenged on Channel 4 over his case for wealth tax

and high earners, which funds the public services we all need. It suggests an indifference as to how we fund the state. Why is public opinion so harsh towards the rich and their economic contribution?

We are stuck in a doom loop: fewer millionaires, meaning fewer advocates from across society and fewer visible ladders to wealth, creating the conditions for fewer millionaires. The willingness of a decent chunk of the country to levy more tax on the rich stems from an assessment of them as a separate class they cannot imagine joining.

This has had a material impact on financial literacy. The polling company Opinium found in 2024 that 23 per cent of Britons had invested in the stock market compared with two thirds of Americans. Auto-enrolment means many more Britons own shares indirectly through pensions, but often without experiencing being an investor themselves.

Clegg didn't get it quite right. Many of our political leaders are more pro-business and pro-rich than a sceptical public. But there's a problem getting Britons to care about wealth creation. Businesses whose model is to extract wealth from the country need to address

> Fewer millionaires means fewer visible ladders to wealth

their critics. But it's impossible to imagine the necessary policy fixes needed without a shift in public opinion towards wealth creation.

How to restore cultural legitimacy to the profit motive? We certainly have a problem of affordability that needs addressing. But imagine a world in which we spoke not of a cost of living crisis but of a "wealth crisis". Recasting it thus would help refocus public opinion on the importance of wealth generation, from the poorest paid to the richest. Without any change, the politics of Gary Stevenson will be back even if he isn't. And we will all be the poorer for it.

James Kanagasooriam is chief research officer at Focaldata

Daniel Finkelstein is away

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Comment

Regime may turn Iran's mothers into radicals

Smuggled footage reveals the resistance and bravery of a population left in limbo by the US

Roger Boyes

@ROGERBOYES

Ordinary Iranians have been living through hellishly helter-skelter times for the past six months, starting with angry nationwide protests against hyperinflation and economic incompetence, a vicious regime crackdown, a suffocating internet blackout, disfigured corpses buried at night — and now an on-off-on war as the US plays with the idea that bombs can still topple a wounded dictatorship.

There was a moment when Iranians believed — wanted to believe — that too. Vengeance could be outsourced to Superman and justice would fall from the skies. "It was this hope that the regime's actions would not go unpunished," a middle-aged woman in a curtained Iranian apartment tells the Anglo-Iranian film-maker Ben Zand.

Another, also recorded in Zand's smuggled footage, seems to glow with the memory of the news that the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, had been killed in his Tehran compound. That night they would dance on the streets. Let off fireworks on the balconies! "We were so relieved," said one. "People who knew what had happened to my son" — a young protester shot in the face a month before — "came round to celebrate."

And yet two weeks later Khamenei's second son Mojtaba was anointed as his successor, evidently with the backing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) heavyweights. "It was as if we had been on a long, long walk," says one of Zand's interviewees, "and ended up where we had started." That trek included fighting the authorities to recover, identify and bury their children. And the decision to go on protests, to stand in front of their children so as to take the bullets intended for the young. And the accelerated brutalisation of society.

"Hospitals used to be considered safe places," a fellow documentary maker tells Zand, "and then everyone suddenly understood that if they went to hospital they would be arrested." At the demonstrations they saw the snipers on the roofs, and on the ground, the carefully rehearsed motion as the regime troops dropped to one knee to steady their aim before firing at civilians.

> What kind of people are we, estranged and repulsed by our rulers?

That is how you crush resistance, or at least force it underground. It was Reza Pahlavi, self-anointed crown prince of the late shah, who had called in January for the Iranians to rise up. For a while President Trump hinted that it was for Iranians to follow that call but it became obvious that Trump would prefer to give some intelligence backing to whatever resistance movement developed than commit US troops. So Iranians realised they could not count on Trump as a liberator. The US had lost that role long before Trump. When Lyndon Johnson's national security adviser McGeorge Bundy was asked what had surprised him most about the failure of US air bombing against the North Vietnamese, he replied (after deep thought), "the endurance of the enemy". He couldn't believe that a poor country run out of Hanoi could withstand the full-blown technological firepower of the US.

That was a failure of imagination. Iran's endurance is of a different calibre. The regime has transformed itself from a clerical stronghold into a police state with a strategic brain. With or without a nuclear arsenal it has become a more complex enemy. It can maintain the trappings of power by upping the pay of those in the security machine, by turning the energy and maritime transit sector into a preserve of the IRGC commanders. Its weakness is that its brutal suppression of the urban young has undermined social support for the political elite.

At the heart of society are the mothers, featured in Zand's unmissable *Inside Iran: War and Revolution* (ITV1, this Sunday, 10.20pm), who define security as a country worth growing up in, with intact families that maintain standards and who are trying to work out a future that doesn't depend on Iran becoming a nuclear-tipped regional hegemon. Or putting on goggles when you collect your children from school lest the riot police try to shoot you in the eye.

The women interviewed by Zand started off as reformists, activists who wanted to dress as they pleased, but they talk now with a revolutionary undertone. They have seen too much over the past six months and many have come to the conclusion they have nothing much left to lose.

It is this vein of bravery that should be tapped into by the Trump administration. The polling for the midterms suggests the Iran war — high costs, indeterminate aims — is a vote-loser. Johnson underestimated the "endurance" of the North Vietnamese fighters and the North Vietnamese people. The current Iranian regime demonstrates that it too can reinvent its fighting capacity — but it has lost many of its natural supporters and wrecked the institutions that once made Iranians proud. Iranians wonder: what kind of people have we become, so estranged from and repulsed by our rulers that we cheer on America to bomb their bunkers? So powerless that we depend on erratic Americans to wreak revenge on our behalf? What kind of moral void have we entered?

Trump gambled he could split Tehran's ruling elite; create "moderates" by luring them into profitable business arrangements. It's a formula he has used elsewhere with mixed results. But what is needed is some kind of soft power outreach to Iranian society, subtle help for those disturbed and disorientated by the past six months of galloping events. There has to be a gap for compassionate cultural diplomacy, a way of de-escalating a war zone while not handing victory to thugs and torturers.

Matthew Parris Notebook

Here in the sky islands, elephants are mating

Have you seen elephants mating? What a to-do! We're in a forest camp in a remote mountain range in northern Kenya: the Mathews Range.

I hope to write more about this enchanting place, but suffice it now to say that from the dry, baking, semi-desert scrubland region just south of Ethiopia and South Sudan rises a 100-mile mountain range, reaching a height of 2,688 metres (8,819ft).

Much of the range is clothed in forest and sometimes cloud. Streams and rivers run down, to disappear into the ground when they reach the plain. Such wonders of nature, monkeys chattering in the trees, are called "sky islands". They have their own micro-climates: warm and rainy rather than parched and bare like the land they rise from. There is something miraculous about the Mathews Range.

Bullish encounter

Where was I? Ah yes, elephants mating. Walking along the mountainside with our guides we heard a commotion and looked across a river below. A young bull elephant had taken a shine to a more mature lady elephant. Up he reared on his hind legs, his tree trunks of front legs resting on her back. She was bellowing — whether from pleasure or distress I cannot say, being unacquainted with the nuances of elephant communication; but I have to report that there appeared to be no attempt on her part to escape.

And then — much crashing in the undergrowth — the plot thickened. A massive bull, much bigger than the young lothario, came thundering through the trees to drive the upstart from the scene. A hasty dismounting followed. And off the young fellow charged, pursued by the senior bull until he was well off the scene. Our guides judged it wisest to walk no further that way and we turned back. Peeping Toms the lot of us, we felt a little embarrassed at having stared, agog, at so intimate a moment in three forest elephants' lives.

Guiding lights

Our four guides, I should mention, would be a match for any elephant. One has a gun, and the rest have wicked-looking spears, one with a giant firework squib in his pocket, capable of producing a bang and a flash that would scare the biggest tusker away. They told me they didn't expect to use their weaponry and have never had to in the Mathews Range. Arrayed in the wonderfully elaborate and colourful costume of their tribe, girdled with beads and shiny ironwork, these Samburu tribesmen are not dressing up to entertain tourists. Almost everyone we passed on the track was clothed in the same way. They make our muted khakis, silly T-shirts and pitiful shorts look so drab. We felt like sparrows, fallen among a flock of birds of bright plumage.

Fuelling the fire

I admire too the ingenuity of these people. One evening, on the sandy beach of the nearby river, they showed us how to make a fire with a stick and a handful of dried camel dung. Like me, you'll have heard about this "primitive" (but I would say "genius") method of achieving ignition. A flat piece of wood with a small hollow gouged out with a knife; a sprinkling of sand in it for friction and some powdered dung beneath it; a length of stick with a pointed end to stick into the hole; and a strong and patient chap ready to twizzle the stick vigorously between two palms until — miracle! — smoke rises from the dung. Who in the history of humans first thought of this? Someone must have. And it changed everything.

Kenya's war on plastic

Kenya feels like a hopeful country, despite the current politics there, which are dreadful. Everywhere you look you see energy, ingenuity and new ideas. Within half an hour of landing at Nairobi airport, I'd seen my first electric three-wheeler tuk-tuk.

Some Kenyan innovation, though groundbreaking, is rather odd. Plastic bags have been banned completely and possession of even one of these is punishable quite severely. The law has worked, and litter in town and country is noticeably reduced since I was last here. The real culprits now are plastic bottles, banned already in national parks; but it's hard to see how these carriers of drinkable water for a thirsty nation could be outlawed completely. Be sure, though, when mankind's tolerance of plastic bottles finally snaps, Kenya will be the first to ban them.

THUNDERER

Burnham should propose new deal to Europe's leaders

Nick Boles

Andy Burnham has demonstrated a remarkable ability to tell a new story about our country and the way it is run. He is the first prime minister to make the devolution of budgets and powers to regional mayors sound sexy.

As the PM's caravan makes for Burnham-on-Sea, he should plan to bring the same clarity and ambition to the UK's relationship with Europe. Currently stuck in the weeds, it needs a new vision that addresses a world that has changed utterly since Brexit. There is a fresh story to tell about Britain as an engine of prosperity and bulwark of security in Europe.

The challenges are immense but a bold approach can surmount them. Britain wants to increase its defence spending to 3.5 per cent of GDP by 2035 but cannot afford to do so with an economy in which business investment and goods trade have been battered by Brexit.

European countries face a growing threat from Russia but cannot rely on the United States as the guarantor of their security through Nato. And the EU must make room for Ukraine and the western Balkans but cannot do this quickly without provoking the veto of member states worried about the strain on European budgets and a new wave of migration from east to west.

Tackling each of these problems separately will be extremely hard. Only by tackling them together can the Gordian knot be cut. Burnham should propose to Europe's leaders a new deal. The creation of an outer ring for Europe, that works in partnership with both the EU and a reformed Nato. A European confederation that Britain and Ukraine would join alongside all EU members, and Norway, Switzerland, Albania and Serbia.

As a confederation member, Britain would participate fully in the European single market for goods, in exchange for a treaty commitment to increase defence spending to 3.5 per cent of GDP and extend the protection of Britain's armed forces and nuclear deterrent to all of Europe.

Ukraine would join the confederation immediately, on its way to full membership of the EU. Benefiting from the single market for goods, it would share the protection of its massive army and superlative drone technologies with the rest of Europe. The confederation would also provide a forum for European co-operation in areas where the EU is not ready to act and a way to deepen collaboration with allies like Canada and Turkey.

In 1945 Labour's greatest leaders asserted Britain's values in helping build international institutions of peace and prosperity. A new moment of flux gives Burnham the opportunity to match their achievement.

Nick Boles's essay Beyond Brexit: a New Deal for Britain, Ukraine and Europe is published today by Demos

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Ariana Grande's image is a danger to girls

Singer's denial that her extreme thinness indicates any kind of problem sets a worrying example to those who idolise her

Sarah Ditum

@SARAHDITUM

It's rude to pass critical judgment on someone's looks. There's a word for it: it's called bodyshaming and it's considered especially unacceptable when it's done to women. Not that this taboo stops it from happening. Check the social media comments under any picture of a famous woman and you'll likely find a detailed breakdown of all her supposed flaws.

And for the past week one famous woman in particular has dominated the conversation about appearance. On Friday, the 33-year-old singer Ariana Grande released her eighth album, *Petal*, alongside a video accompanying the title track. In it, she looks shockingly, morbidly thin: chestbones showing through her skin, eyes bulging, limbs fragile and tiny.

Fans made their concern clear, and on Monday Grande announced she would be stepping back from public life after her current tour and dropping out of the West End revival of the Sondheim musical *Sunday in the Park with George* — although her representative stressed this was about taking a break from scrutiny rather than for health reasons.

I feel reflexively protective of Grande. Young female celebrities have a notoriously rough time of it but Grande's career has been marked by exceptional tragedy. In 2017, an Islamist suicide bomber targeted her concert at the Manchester Arena, killing 22 innocent people. She paused her tour to play a benefit concert for the victims.

Today she's a multi-platinum artist with an Oscar nomination for her performance as Glinda in *Wicked*, but I first knew her as a child star. I watched her in the Nickelodeon sitcoms *Victorious* and *Sam & Cat* with my daughter in the Noughties. On screen, Grande had the screwball sensibility of a teenage Lucille Ball: she seemed picked out for stardom.

> It is undeniably brutal to be at the centre of this kind of discussion

Behind the scenes, though, it was a dark time. The 2024 documentary *Quiet on Set* alleged these productions were beset by a culture of misogyny and bullying. Two Nickelodeon crew members were convicted of sexual offences against children in the Noughties. Grande's former co-star Jennette McCurdy has written that this environment fostered her own disordered relationship with eating.

Grande has persistently denied any suggestion that she is struggling with similar issues. When speculation about her extreme thinness last peaked, during promotion for *Wicked*, she issued a video statement in which she said that "personally, for me, the body that you've been comparing my current body to was the unhealthiest version of my body". She asked that fans "be gentle with each other and yourselves".

It is undeniably brutal to be at the centre of this kind of discussion, not all of it kindly meant or thoughtfully delivered. But Grande uses the language of body positivity and self-care to delegitimise anyone who states the obvious about her appearance. At a certain point, the taboo on bodyshaming becomes cover for what looks like seriously unwell behaviour. When does "being gentle" shade into the dangerous denial of reality?

Many of the young women and girls who make up Grande's core fanbase will sympathise with her plea for a respite from commentary on her appearance: they have experienced the same scrutiny themselves and know how dehumanising it can be. A group of teenage girls from Tyneside have just produced a video protesting against misogynist language online and sent it to the Department for Education and the prime minister.

But there's also a current of genuine fury at Grande from some of this cohort, including my 20-year-old daughter. Regardless of whether Grande's skeletal appearance is because of anorexia or some other cause, young women and girls who have grown up on social media know what this kind of image can do to them. It serves as "thinspiration" — proof of their own inadequacy, and an encouragement to enter their own starvation programmes.

> Grande might counter that she never wanted to be a role model

Anorexia is a disease of the mind before it attacks the body. It starts as an idea, spreading like a virus from girl to girl (though cases among boys are rising). The drive to extreme thinness becomes an all-consuming competition. Fewer than half of sufferers fully recover. About 5 per cent die within four years of diagnosis. Anorexia is the deadliest of all the psychiatric disorders.

That's why the conversation about Grande's body is not really about Grande at all. It's about the girls who see her cadaverous body presented as the apex of beauty and understand it as an indictment of their own. (This is especially concerning because Grande's role in *Wicked* has made her a fairytale princess, with fans as young as pre-school.)

Grande might counter that she never wanted to be a role model. Her new album bristles with complaints about the constraints of fame. "Is it really my fault you all gave me your hearts of your own accord?" she asks on one song. But when you see concert footage, she basks in the love of her fans — a love she would like to be uncritical of her appearance.

It's easy to point at Grande's managers and publicists and say they're failing in their duty of care by putting her on a stage when she looks like she should be in recovery. Whatever the reason for Grande's desperate thinness, hopefully this career break will give her the chance to get some of the support she needs. She deserves compassion.

But she also deserves judgment. Eating disorders are a form of self-harm: promoting images that encourage eating disorders can be a kind of violence. I don't use this language lightly. If we adopt a tactful collective silence about a star who appears to be starving in plain sight we become complicit in the harm to the millions who idolise her. Sometimes, there are bigger things to worry about than shaming.

Alice Thomson is away

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Commons reform

Sir, It seems that a group of MPs and peers are encouraging the prime minister to set up a commission on House of Lords reform. They have picked the wrong target. What is needed is a commission on House of Commons reform. In my 42 years' service in the Commons, I was much involved with efforts to make the House more effective, and these had some success, especially in supporting and extending the work of select committees. The 2024 general election brought into parliament 335 new MPs — 52 per cent of the House — with no parliamentary experience; no experience or knowledge of legislative scrutiny or of calling governments to account. It would be surprising if there were any other major national institution in which more than half of its members had no practical experience of its core tasks.

The result is easy to see. Most legislation barely touches the sides in the Commons, and it is left to the House of Lords to act as an expert scrutineer of what government all too often seeks to enact without real democratic accountability.

Lord Lisvane
Clerk of the House of Commons 2011-14; House of Lords

Rules for royalties

Sir, I wonder if John Alty (letter; Aug 4) actually spoke to any creators who believe that the copyright on their work is granted "on behalf of the public" and that to extend royalties would mean the public is paying over the odds. Or that their work should be available for other artists to pulverise (whoops; I mean "build on").

The copyright for written work, for example, expires 70 years after the death of the author. That might be reasonable — but the copyright for sound and music ends 70 years after it is published, which means someone copyrighting their work may find their children losing out. And copyright for the layout of written, dramatic and musical works expires after 25 years, even though it is that layout that led to the work's success.

Worse than any potential royalties, however, is the ability for successive generations to take a work and change it, possibly even rendering it unrecognisable from the original. What would Mr Alty think if he spent hours, days, weeks or months working on something in the knowledge that someone in the future might mangle it beyond recognition?

Perhaps the answer is for royalties to end 70 years after the creator's death — but that no one has the right to change that work. And that includes Shakespeare.

Marcia MacLeod
London NW6

Corrections and clarifications

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Contested changes to jail early-release scheme

Sir, The early release of all violent offenders is anathema to decent people but a justifiable cause of fear and outrage to all victims and their families, particularly in communities to which offenders may return ("Killers but not rapists to be given early release", Aug 4). For the government it is clearly a pragmatic decision; for those most affected it is a potential nightmare.

As a minimum, the Parole Board should be given oversight of the cases and asked to apply its usual criteria for conditional release. This involves assessing the risk of reoffending as well as the risk of serious harm to the public, and applying appropriate safeguards where necessary. But if the panel judges the risks too high or the safeguards inadequate, the applicant must remain in custody to serve more of his or her sentence.

Ronald Thwaites KC
Esher, Surrey

Sir, Like many people, I am aghast at the decision not to block the early release of PC Andrew Harper's killers. This has not only destroyed what credibility Andy Burnham had since taking office but it is also a betrayal of any lingering trust the public might have had in our so-called justice system. Further, it has shown up the shallowness of the prime minister's comments regarding his supposed empathy with PC Harper's family.

Any possible difference it would make to the overall prison population by not releasing these particular two killers is minimal. I am in no doubt that this monumental error will not just lose Mr Burnham respect but, crucially, will cost his party votes at the next general election.

John Peacock
Northallerton, N Yorks

Sir, As a criminal defence solicitor of 35 years' experience, I have seen many changes in early release provisions. The problem with prison overcrowding, which often causes these policy shifts, lies with the escalating length of longer sentences. The average custodial sentence length for indictable offences rose from 16 months in 1993 to 22 months in December 2025. Those averages are pulled up by the increased length of sentences for the more serious offences, say eight years plus. The traditional objectives of sentencing are threefold: punishment of the offender, deterrence of others, and rehabilitation. Would a sentence of nine years rather than one of 12 years for a serious offence make a difference in achieving any of those objectives? In terms of the prison population, a 12-year sentence is likely to result in two years' additional time behind bars.

In most cases before 2020, offenders were released on licence halfway through their prison sentences. Boris Johnson's government reintroduced a release date of two thirds of the sentence served for jail terms of more than eight years. That and sentence inflation have caused the problem that this government must now address.

Andrew Bishop
Bishop and Light Solicitors, Hove

Sir, According to the latest government statistics, there are 10,700 foreign citizens in UK prisons, about 12 per cent of the total prison population. Perhaps the prime minister should tackle this problem before allowing the early release of those convicted of serious offences.

Nick Pascoe
Former Prison Service area manager; Sherborne, Dorset

'Plagiarism' furore

Sir, I've worked for more than 25 years in six UK universities variously as a lecturer, learning support co-ordinator, and dyslexia support tutor. Each institution provided its students with a referencing guide that gave clear and unambiguous advice on how to avoid plagiarism (deliberate or accidental). And no exception was made for students with disabling conditions. Having read your report about Professor Jason Arday ("Star academic accused of plagiarism: I am not a liar", news, Aug 1), I cannot personally see why he shouldn't be declared a plagiarist. "Honest and reasonable error?" Pull the other one.

Dr Lloyd Richardson
Grantham, Lincs

Fire service reserve

Sir, Libby Purves was right to highlight the shortage of on-call firefighters as a factor affecting Britain's ability to prepare for the impact of climate change ("Wildfire suggests rewilding needs a rethink", Aug 3; letters, Aug 4). Surely we should now consider creating a fire service reserve force, much like the army reserve, to supplement and support the UK fire and rescue service at times of extreme demand and national emergency? As events have demonstrated, wildfires are resource-intensive, and the traditional methods of a fire service being able to call on resources from other services to support large and protracted incidents have been stretched to the limit.

Owing to repeated underfunding, fire station closures and on-call recruitment difficulties, UK fire and rescue services are now not always able to provide support to services outside their own area. The creation of a modern fire service reserve force trained to undertake specific tasks along the lines of the army reserve could be part of a wider strategy to enhance UK fire and rescue capability at times of national emergency and our resilience.

Kevin Trust
Member of the Institution of Fire Engineers; Fontwell, W Sussex

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime phone number.

Dearth of chit-chat

Sir, James Marriott rightly bemoans the lack of conversation in modern life owing to screens and headphones ("In the silence, you can hear society crumble", Aug 4). I have found that one of the very few pleasures of old age is the freedom to chat to all and sundry in a non-threatening fashion, especially in places such as our friendly market town. As I weed the streets along our pretty high street people of all ages stop to chat, complain about the weather and tell me their life stories. The art of conversation has not yet completely died.

Jill Brierley
Chipping Sodbury, Glos

Rumbustious Rod

Sir, I knew Rod Liddle (obituary, Aug 4) quite well and used him during the pandemic as the chair of Zoom launches of some of my books. Not many TV chairs smoke and drink wine openly as they do the job. Rod did. He was a one-off in all senses of the word.

John Mair
Broadcaster and author, Oxford

A HISTORIC HEIST AT KNIFEPOINT

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 5, 1926

The Royal Literary Fund has deposited on loan in the Armouries of the Tower two daggers stated to have been used by Colonel Blood and Parrot when they made an attempt to steal the Crown Jewels on May 9, 1671. In one of the descriptions of the attempt it was stated that Blood wounded Edwards, the Keeper of the Jewels, with his dagger.

The weapons were bequeathed in 1807 to the Royal Literary Fund by Thomas Newton, a relative of Sir Isaac Newton. There are no records as to how these daggers came into the possession of Mr Newton, the only link that his family had with the Tower being that Sir Isaac Newton was Master of the Mint, then established within the Tower precincts, and he might, therefore, have obtained them from one of the officers of the Tower.

They are interesting souvenirs of the type known as the "kidney dagger", which was in favour from the end of the 14th to the beginning of the 17th century. Both are engraved with crude scroll work, one being stamped with a crowned T, and the other with a crowned L, obviously the products of the same workshop. The longer weapon is engraved 1620, the latest recorded date for daggers of this type. The sheaths are tooled with thistles placed horizontally. Daggers of this type are by no means common in museums and it is extremely rare, if not unique, to find two daggers by the same school of swordsmiths associated. They would be quite convenient for Blood's purpose as there is no hilt and, therefore, they could be concealed by the person and drawn with ease.

● The principal shopping interest at the moment is country clothes, as distinct from seaside holiday clothes, with which most people have already supplied themselves. Belated shoppers seeking bathing garments can, of course, find something sensible and practical, but most shops sold their gayest and most elaborate outfits either before or during the sales. Now the more solid garments and country, golfing or shooting kit are being shown, and also the mid-season novelties, which are sought by those who do not intend to see London again until September. Selfridges has a sale of underwear at special prices next week and also a sale of fox ties.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Wedgwood's woes

Sir, Why does AN Wilson try to implicate the recently deceased Marquess of Queensberry in the collapse of Wedgwood and other firms in the Staffordshire Potteries ("Why I'm roused by the marquesses's death", Aug 1)? As a former keeper of ceramics at the V&A I can agree with Wilson in blaming Sir Arthur Bryan, as managing director of Wedgwood, for buying up and asset-stripping so many pottery firms. Yet even Sir Arthur can't be blamed for Stoke's failure to retain the 80,000 workers it once employed. Growing competition from the Far East left European potteries no alternative but to automate their production.

David Queensberry had played no part in Sir Arthur's decision, which Wilson so deplores, to float Wedgwood on the stock market. In 2003, when the fate of the Wedgwood conglomerate still hung in the balance and the skids were under its rival conglomerate, Royal Doulton, David Queensberry wrote: "My message to the industry is this: harness design and technology as Wedgwood did in the 18th century to create a new look in tableware." Through the firm he co-founded with Martin Hunt, Queensberry made it his mission to market this new look. He saw that the Staffordshire Potteries could not live off tired versions of past successes. In this he had been at one with AN Wilson's distinguished father, Norman Wilson.

JVG Mallet
London W14

Doors to manual

Sir, I have to disagree with the AA's idea of allowing people who have passed their driving test on an automatic car to be allowed to drive a manual car simply by attending a one-hour "conversion course" (news, Aug 3). I passed my automatic car driving test at my first attempt. Several years later I thought I ought to have a licence for manual cars, and had several lessons in one, followed by a test, which I was mortified to fail; but at least it was failings in the operation of the gearbox and clutch rather than my road sense. I passed the second time, but I can assure whoever thinks it would be a good idea that it is not as easy as you might think.

Helen Bell
Martham, Norfolk

Fibbing formula

Sir, On the subject of whether to tell the truth when applying for a job (Giles Coren, Aug 1; letter, Aug 4), I would strongly recommend doing so. I once started a letter of application for a teacher's post with the sentence: "I am disqualified for this post on three grounds". I got the job and loved it. Perhaps it helped that it was a Church of England school.

Barbara Curry
Winchcombe, Glos

Sunk without trace

Sir, It is amusing that the glossy brochure brandished by Nigel Farage to launch the so-called Operation Fortress features a picture of HMS Ocean, a ship decommissioned by the Royal Navy in 2018 and sold to Brazil ("Farage's plan for navy to return migrants is illegal, says France", Aug 4). It appears Reform UK knows as much about the navy as it does about international law.

Richard Pethybridge
Cdr RN (ret'd), Thatcham, Berks

Daily Universal Register

Guidance on single-sex spaces, following the publication of advice by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in September last year, comes into force from today.

Nature notes

From time immemorial locals have gathered to celebrate the Kilburn Feast. Once a horse fair, it now features quoits, welly-wanging and a mock mayoress who imposes fines for putting washing out or carrying an umbrella. This year, proceedings were interrupted by the unforgettable incursion of a signal crayfish. Had the lobster-like fish jumped out of the adjacent Twattleton Beck, where a flotilla of yellow ducks had been waiting for the duck race? Signal crayfish are known for their ability to swap water for land and have been recorded scuttling 300 metres in a night. It's this ambulatory skill that allowed the invasive signal crayfish to quickly spread to all parts of the country after being introduced in the 1970s. JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today

Janet McTeer, *pictured*, actress, *Albert Nobbs* (2011), Minerva McGonagall in the Harry Potter TV series (2027-), 65; **Vice-Admiral Edward Ahlgren**, senior adviser to the Ministry of Defence (Middle East and north Africa), 55; **Anne Aslett**, chief executive, Elton John Aids Foundation, 62; **David Baldacci**, novelist, *Walk the Wire* (2020), 66; **Shigeru Ban**, architect, Cardboard Cathedral, Christchurch, New Zealand (2013), 69; **Joe Boyd**, music producer, Pink Floyd and Fairport Convention, and writer, 84; **Rt Rev Christopher Chessun**, bishop of Southwark (who retires today), 70; **Adrian Fisher**, maze designer, creator of more than 700 mazes, 75; **Jan Francis**, actress, *Just Good Friends* (1983-86), 79; **Reid Hoffman**, co-founder and former executive chairman of LinkedIn (social network), 59; **Sir Roly Keating**, chief executive, British Library (2012-24), 65; **Marine Le Pen**, French politician, ran for the presidency in 2012, 2017 and 2022, parliamentary party leader of the National Rally, 58; **Maureen McCormick**, actress, *The Brady Bunch* (1969-74), 70; **Dan Neidle**, founder of Tax Policy Associates (not-for-profit company), 53; **Rodney Pattisson**, yachtsman, double Olympic gold medallist (1968, 1972), 83; **Lord (John) Randall of Uxbridge**, Conservative MP (1997-2015), deputy chief whip (2010-13), 71; **Nikhil Rathi**, chief executive, Financial Conduct Authority, London Stock Exchange plc (2015-20), 47; **Prof Sue Rigby**, palaeontologist, principal and vice-chancellor, Edinburgh Napier University, 61; **Andy Roxburgh**, footballer, manager, Scotland football team (1986-93), 83; **Lord (John) Spellar**, Labour MP from 1974-2024 and former government minister, 79; **Wanda Ventham**, actress, *UFO* (1970-71), *Invasion: UFO* (1980) and *Sherlock* (2014-17), 91; **John Whitaker**, equestrian, Olympic silver medallist (1984), 71.

On this day

In **1914** the first electric traffic lights in America were installed in Cleveland, Ohio, and controlled from a nearby booth.

The last word

"There is nothing worse than having your personal problems become somebody else's entertainment." Maureen O'Hara, film actress and singer, *'Tis Herself* (2004)

Roulette of Release

Andy Burnham has wisely revised plans to free some prisoners early. But the criminal justice system needs repairing to ensure this never happens again

The new prime minister's desk is straining with difficult decisions that have no straightforward answers. At the very top of the pile is stopping the criminal justice system from collapsing. For two years, prisons have been near capacity. Successive justice secretaries have faced the dire prospect of the police being unable to arrest people as there would be nowhere to put them. Reluctantly the only immediate solution has been to release prisoners early. Since September 2024, more than 70,000 people have been freed in this manner. Had this not occurred, the Ministry of Justice claimed it would run out of spaces in November.

The need to release so many prisoners early has, inevitably, made the process into a game of roulette. The very public flouting of their freedom by ex-convicts has done little to calm concerns. There has also been an outcry that those convicted of very serious offences could soon serve less than half of their time — down from two thirds. Andy Burnham, eager to continue the goodwill following his arrival in Downing Street, has announced that those convicted of rape, child sexual assault and grooming offences will no longer be eligible for early release. Therefore about 1,000 of the 5,000 prisoners due for release next month will now remain in prison.

Mr Burnham says this is as far as he can go in blocking early releases without endangering the system, meaning those serving time for manslaughter and serious domestic abuse offences could still be freed sooner. Drawing this line will be difficult. It is particularly hurtful for the family of PC Andrew Harper, whose two killers convicted of manslaughter will be eligible for release in January. Pia Sinha of the Prison Reform Trust has said there are no "happy solutions" and further exemptions will only lead to a more acute crisis.

This suboptimal situation is not the fault of Mr Burnham or Alex Norris, the newly installed justice secretary. It is a consequence of short-termist thinking by the last Conservative governments. Between 2010 and 2024, 23 prisons were closed with 12,500 prison spaces disappearing. Some 13,000 were added, meaning a net of just 500 extra places during 14 years in office. Many of the crumbling Victorian buildings that closed were long past their useful date. But given that it takes about seven years to build a new prison in the UK, there is a significant lag in the system. An additional 14,000 places are due to be ready by 2031, but that will not solve this immediate crisis.

This problem has been compounded by sentencing inflation. According to the Ministry of Justice, the average sentence length increased by 45 per cent — from 13.7 months in 2010 to 19.9 in 2024. This has ramped up the demand on prisons without doing anything to improve the supply. The pandemic exacerbated the strain on criminal justice, with huge backlogs on criminal cases to be tried. So in the short term, Mr Norris and Mr Burnham have little option but to continue to release prisoners — or pursue sentencing reform to reduce the time spent in prison. There is also a broader conversation to be had about rehabilitation and what can be done to avoid reoffending, which costs the economy £23 billion every year.

Beyond that, the Burnham government must fast-track the building of new prisons. It can be done: between 1990 and 2005, a new prison was built in the United States every ten days. Overruling local councillors and cutting red tape could mean more places quickly: the Ministry of Justice estimates that 6,400 prison places have been delayed owing to planning setbacks. The ambition to build 20,000 new places was estimated to cost the taxpayer £5.2 billion; now it may be almost double that. Mr Burnham should spend some political capital on more prisons, now. Otherwise he will be trapped in a doomed cycle of early releases, each one weakening confidence in his government.

Labour's Dirty Word

Ministers are indulging the lazy sentiment that profit is a vice

Andy Burnham has so far reaped the rewards of positioning himself as the reasonable alternative to populists who stoke false grievances. But politicians of Mr Burnham's political stripe often find themselves resorting to equally tired gambits. The current Labour government is particularly vulnerable to indulging the moribund idea that profit is a vice. Especially when facing fiscal troubles, such as those brought on by renewed conflict in Iran, their first reaction is to rail against private-sector "profiteering" and threaten more tax. Mr Burnham, in particular, speaks in a disconcertingly vague way of his desire to undo the "neoliberal" legacy of Thatcherism — apparently in order to turn the clock back 40 years.

Labour must quash this silly urge. The demonisation of profit-making is an anti-market trope that is as populist as any. To portray wealth creators and successful firms as the enemy of the public finances is to indulge in the laziest kind of economic illiteracy. Profit should not be a dirty word. One example of Labour's perennial wariness of profiteering was provided at the weekend by John Healey, the new chancellor. Addressing concerns that supermarkets and petrol stations might exploit inflationary conditions to engage in price gouging, Mr Healey intimated that the government would intervene if consumers were "being taken for a ride at the pump or the till".

The chancellor could hardly have alighted on a more ill-chosen target. Britain's supermarkets sell some of the most affordable food in western Europe. In fact, supermarkets are a prime example of fierce free market competition working to the benefit of customers. Far from profiteering, supermarkets' profit margins are typically far lower than those of the average FTSE 100 company, usually running at 2 to 4 per cent, and, in the case of discount chains such as Lidl and Aldi, even less than that. Nor is there any evidence, according to the Competition and Markets Authority, that petrol stations engaged in price gouging at the start of the war in Iran. In fact, the chancellor himself admitted there was "no significant evidence" of the practice having occurred.

Having just reported impressive profits in the second financial quarter of this year, Britain's banks find themselves in Labour's firing line. As chancellor, Rachel Reeves contemplated a windfall tax on banks, but was rightly dissuaded. Mr Healey is being put under pressure, notably by the Trades Union Congress, to revisit the proposal as a way of funding the prime minister's mounting spending plans. Yet Britain's tax regime already puts its banks at a comparative disadvantage to international rivals — subjecting them to special levies on the size of their balance sheets and surcharges on corporation tax. A windfall tax would make conditions even more uncompetitive, discouraging investment.

The problem with shaking down successful businesses was illustrated by BP's decision last week to sell off its assets in the North Sea. Large firms will exit a market if national governments make operations financially unviable. In BP's case, it is the vast sums paid to the energy profits windfall tax that has prompted its move. Rather than demonising profit-making, Labour should show the public the respect of assuming they know how free markets work. Profit-making is an inevitable and welcome feature of a flourishing economy — not a scourge to be eliminated.

Cleared for Take-off

Gatwick's long-awaited second runway is finally about to go ahead

The Court of Appeal's categorical dismissal of the attempt to stop the use of a second runway at Gatwick is good news indeed. London's second airport, the busiest in Britain after Heathrow, can finally bring into regular use an emergency runway that has remained mostly idle since the construction of the airport on a former Sussex racecourse. Expansion will create an estimated 14,000 jobs, produce an extra £1 billion in economic benefits and relieve the intense pressure on Heathrow by allowing some 100,000 additional flights a year, serving about 13 million passengers, by the time work is completed in 2030.

The court's terse rebuff to the anti-runway campaign, ostensibly because of the extra noise, was a deserved put-down. It said the grounds of the appeal — that Heidi Alexander, the transport secretary, had not taken into account the effect of the runway on government carbon-reduction targets in her consent to expansion last year — were "unarguable". Few other countries allow planning applications to be held up so long. In the 13 years since Gatwick proposed building a second runway, China has built from scratch 70 civil airports.

All economic surveys agree that Britain, especially London, needs more airport capacity if it is not to lose out to Amsterdam and other European airports able to exploit Heathrow's congestion. A plan has finally been agreed on how to open another runway at Heathrow, at immense expense and unlikely to be operational for many years. Gatwick, by contrast, needs only to move the unused runway 12 metres north and service it with infrastructure. It also has the great advantage of having a fast and frequent train service to London and connections to other parts of the rail network. Relying on a single runway has been a curb on growth. That blockage will now go. And Britain's economy will benefit immensely.

World

Tehran steps up public hangings of young dissidents

Iran's recent surge in executions is a warning to protesters, report **Roxana Saberi** and **Fatemeh Jamalpour**

A demonstration in Washington in support of Abolfazl Sepahi, 23, and Amirhossein Safari, 28, who were hanged from a crane in a public square in Isfahan last week after taking part in anti-regime protests in January

The towering yellow crane appeared in Alikhani Square on a Monday afternoon. Residents of Isfahan knew it was not there for construction. It had been brought in as a gallows for the public execution of three men arrested during the anti-regime protests across Iran in January.

The authorities were preparing to execute Amirhossein Safari, 28, Abolfazl Sepahi, 23, and his cousin, Alireza Sepahi, about 25.

A crowd gathered in the square to support the condemned and protest against their executions. Among them was Jila, a resident of Tehran who had marched in the demonstrations and taken a six-and-a-half-hour cab ride to reach Isfahan before dawn on Tuesday last week.

"The crowd was enormous," Jila, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

Soon, the dawn call to prayer echoed through the air and two of the men, Safari and Abolfazl Sepahi, were hanged.

"Regime supporters began chanting '*Allahu akbar*' and cheering," Jila recalled. "The people who had gathered became furious and booed them ... we shouted, 'Shameless! Shameless!'"

Security forces fired into the air, Jila said. "Those who went forward were beaten with batons, shot with paintball guns and tear gassed." Her voice broke as she talked. "I don't want to cry," she said. "People are consumed by profound grief and enormous anger."

The third detainee, Alireza Sepahi, did not reach the gallows having suffered what rights groups have described as either a stroke or a heart attack that morning. They said doctors revived him at a hospital before he was returned to Isfahan's Dastgerd Prison.

Iran's judiciary accused the men of participating in the killings of four security officers and setting fire to public property during protests in Alikhani Square on January 8.

They were among at least 12 men who received death sentences in the case. UN experts have called on Iran to quash the sentences, saying that the closed-door proceedings had violated fair trial standards.

Before Tuesday's executions in Isfahan, two others charged in the same case were hanged on July 19. At least eight more may be executed. They include Shervin Bagherian, 18, and Amirhossein Maleki, 20. Their families have been summoned for final visits, according to relatives and activists.

Families are often threatened into silence, but a relative of one of the condemned men told The Times that interrogators had subjected him to four mock executions. "They stripped him naked, soaked his body and tortured him with electric shocks for hours to force him to confess," the relative said.

They said the men were pressured to not retain independent lawyers and that evidence placing some of the men in other locations when the security officers were killed was rejected.

Mehdi, a former political prisoner who spoke using a pseudonym, said he had met a few of the Alikhani defendants while he was detained in Isfahan. "It was a really difficult experience ... seeing innocent young boys being tortured," he said. "Honestly, it was harder than enduring the torture myself."

Mehdi said the men had probably endured the same kinds of torture that he did. "They were torturing us in different ways, with batons, belts and cables ... and by applying electric shocks to sensitive parts of our bodies," he said.

Still, when the men were together, they told stories, joked and wrote poetry, Mehdi said. One of the defendants, he recalled, had a playful sense of humour and loved riding motorcycles. Another loved card games and "really was the smartest among us".

"I'm really not doing well at all," Mehdi said after last week's hangings. He hopes that the detainees' legacy will endure. "I want the world to know that we have truly suffered," he said, "and that we gave up our youth so that others could be free."

Executions have surged in Iran this year. With international attention focused on the war, Tehran has sentenced dozens of other January protesters to death. It often follows opaque proceedings involving denial of due process, and allegations of torture and coerced confessions, rights activists have said.

The Islamic Republic has already carried out at least 43 executions in political and national security cases from January to July this year, according to the Washington-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran. At least 26 were linked to the January protests and three to the Woman, Life, Freedom uprising of 2022.

"What is striking today is the speed with which death sentences are being imposed, the return of public executions and the use of broadly defined espionage charges to silence witnesses and deter the circulation of information," said Roya Boroumand, the centre's executive director. She said the hangings of three protesters in the city of Qom in March, followed by last week's executions in Isfahan, appeared intended to reassure regime supporters that those accused of using violence against security forces will be punished.

Boroumand said the regime's repression at home and its actions abroad were inextricably linked, adding: "As long as Iranians are denied the right to participate in public life and influence their country's domestic and foreign policies, the Islamic Republic will remain a source of instability and threat."

Vahid, who was shot during the January protests in Karaj, west of Tehran, said anyone on the streets could have suffered the same fate as the men hanged in Isfahan. "They were arrested, while we got away," said Vahid, 30. "But we cannot be indifferent."

On the evening of January 8, Vahid joined a crowd larger than any he had ever seen outside a football stadium. Half an hour later, security forces opened fire. Vahid described a Toyota pickup truck mounted with what appeared to be a machinegun firing at demonstrators, while men on motorcycles fired assault rifles.

"There were bodies everywhere," he said. "We had stones. They had guns."

A boy of about 16 or 17 was shot in the back of the head a few feet from him. Vahid dragged the boy towards an alley, but as he turned back a bullet tore through his pocket and into his thigh. The boy did not survive.

Vahid has permanent nerve damage and still cannot walk but he does not regret joining the protest. "If it happened a thousand times," he said, "I would go a thousand times."

Regime may turn Iran's mothers into radicals, Roger Boyes, page 22

Flat-pack stage brings opera to the masses

Spain
David Sharrock

From grand city squares to sleepy village plazas, an opera troupe armed with a flat-pack stage is on a mission to take its rarefied art form far beyond its gilded home in the Spanish capital.

Travelling with a replica of Madrid's Royal Theatre proscenium arch, the company is criss-crossing the country on an unlikely cultural pilgrimage, bringing opera to places where it has seldom, if ever, been heard.

The 22-tonne articulated lorry hauling the remarkable travelling theatre has spent the past five years logging more than 75,000 miles. La Carroza del Real, which could be loosely translated as "the Royal Opera on wheels", has introduced tens of thousands of spectators to live opera, for many their first exposure to an art form that rarely steps outside Madrid and Barcelona.

And judging from the standing ovation that the performance received in the seaside resort town of Castro Urdiales near Bilbao last weekend — where it competed against the call of seagulls, the whine of 50cc moped exhausts and even the warning beep of a reversing mobility scooter — the "caravan" has struck a chord.

The itinerant stage recalls the poet Federico García Lorca's La Barraca, his student-led mobile theatre that toured the Spanish Republic in the 1930s bringing golden-age drama to remote communities.

"It has a very clear vocation: bringing popular pieces from opera and *zarzuela* [a Spanish lyric-dramatic genre] to

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MARTA GONZÁLEZ DE LA PEÑA THE TIMES

La Carroza del Real, which loosely translates as "the Royal Opera on wheels", brings a replica of Madrid's Royal Theatre proscenium arch to towns such as Castro Urdiales near Bilbao. Performers say the shows have successfully brought the art form to new audiences

every corner of Spain," said Lourdes Sánchez-Ocaña, the Royal Theatre's brand and institutional image director.

"The stage and the scenography accompanying this recital are very special, because it is a replica of the proscenium arch of the main stage of the Royal Theatre. It is a way of metaphorically breaking the walls of the Royal Theatre itself and taking it out to towns, squares and cities all over Spain."

The theatre is a miracle of Ikea-style flatpack mobility. A 40ft shipping container — one of 500 that the theatre uses to store set designs for its productions — arrives 12 hours before the performance, at which point a team led by Jesus Rueda and armed with power drills breaks out the contents, assembling them into an impressive simulacrum of what operagoers in Madrid would pay handsomely to set foot inside.

The five young artists arrive later, drawn from the theatre's in-house Crescendo Project, devised by the Friends of the Royal Theatre Foundation to offer intensive training and professional mentoring to emerging talent.

"The idea is to bring lyrical repertoire, especially *zarzuela*, which is the most distinctly Spanish lyrical genre, to communities that don't usually have access to it," said the Colombian mezzosoprano Yeraldín León. "It's not the typical theatre set-up where there's a distance between performers and audience."

The pianist Álvaro Martín Gómez said: "It's a revival of the spirit of Lorca's La Barraca, which had the goal of bringing culture to every corner and democratising it, because culture belongs to everyone."

The Romanian soprano Alexandra Zamfira highlighted the demand: "It's happened several times that when we finish a performance, the local councillors or mayor immediately say, 'We need to set a date for next year because this has been a hit'."

The tenor Pablo Martínez Gil recalled: "We did a recital one night, and it was raining heavily, but nobody left their seat until the concert ended. We said, 'Right, we'll wrap it up,' but the audience insisted — they wanted encores, they wanted us to continue."

Before his performance, the baritone Alonso Gabarrús said: "Whether it's Castro Urdiales, the Royal Theatre itself or any village, there are always nerves before going on stage, but I think they also contain an element of excitement about doing what we love."

The evening ends amid applause and the wafting scent of barbecued fish from a seafront restaurant next to the pop-up concert space. As the audience drifts away for dinner and enthusiasts ask for photographs with their new favourite singers, Rueda's team has already sprung into action. By midnight the mini-Royal Theatre will be back inside the same shipping container which has just served as tonight's stage. And Rueda will be on the road south. Looking at his watch, he says: "With any luck I'll be home by 4.30am."

EU demands tighter border security after Ceuta migrant crisis

Spain
David Sharrock Ceuta
Isambard Wilkinson Madrid

For centuries the walls of Ceuta have repelled armies and defended a north African city whose sovereignty has long been contested. Today the young migrants sheltering in those same walls are testament to a different kind of conflict, which Spanish officials describe as "hybrid warfare" by Morocco — and the scale of which has alarmed governments across Europe.

Spain's interior ministry disclosed yesterday that about 72,000 people crossed irregularly into Ceuta last week, an increase on previous estimates and the biggest surge seen in the Spanish territory. Spanish authorities say at least 75 people have died during the mass crossings, where crowds of mostly young men swam round a headland to circumvent the land border. Moroccan officials confirmed 11 deaths on their side of the frontier.

Although nearly all — roughly 70,000 — have since returned to Morocco, about 2,000 remain, and Madrid has accused Rabat of encouraging the surge to exert political leverage.

Beyond Ceuta's orderly centre, where a heavy police presence has restored a semblance of normality, the crisis had been simply displaced rather than resolved. Along beaches east of the city centre, small groups of exhausted migrants seek shelter in the shade of the promenade or on abandoned sunbeds, waiting for news of what comes next.

The city's migrant reception facilities are overwhelmed. Outside a temporary reception centre, people from Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa, Bangladesh and Syria have been waiting for days in the hope that a space will become available. Others drift through industrial estates and residential neighbourhoods carrying plastic bags and scraps of cardboard, searching for somewhere to spend the night.

On the promenade overlooking the Moroccan frontier, soldiers have been deployed as a deterrent after the mass influx. Residents, meanwhile, go about their daily lives against the backdrop of an unresolved border crisis.

The government of Pedro Sánchez, Spain's prime minister, has avoided directly criticising Morocco. But officials accuse Rabat of deliberately easing border controls to exert political pressure over Ceuta and the wider relationship between the two countries — an allegation which is denied by the Maghreb kingdom.

Among the migrants still in Ceuta are about 860 unaccompanied minors, who cannot be summarily returned under Spanish law and will gradually be transferred to reception facilities in mainland Spain after individual assessments. That prospect has prompted fierce opposition from Spain's right-wing parties, and deepening divisions over immigration in Europe.

Italy, backed by about 20 member states, has already pressed for tougher external border controls, faster returns and EU-funded processing centres in third countries. Greece called for a stronger mechanism to respond to what it described as the "instrumentalisation" of migration. The European Commission said the Ceuta crisis underscored the need to fully implement the bloc's new migration pact.

Fernando Grande-Marlaska, the Spanish interior minister, insisted that an emergency video call with EU interior ministers yesterday had been "entirely constructive" and had recognised Spain's "effective and immediate response" to the emergency.

Spanish officials argue that criminal trafficking networks and misleading social media campaigns exploited confusion surrounding a recent ruling by the country's Supreme Court that said migrants intercepted on Spanish soil after arriving by sea could not be immediately returned.

Madrid has repeatedly insisted that what happened in the territory is "a European challenge" requiring a European response, but also warned against turning the crisis into another round of political recriminations between member states.

Italy has suspended passport-free Schengen travel arrangements with Spain for a month, even though they do not apply to Ceuta, and 22 of the EU's 27 members urged co-ordinated action to strengthen the bloc's external borders. Led by Italy and Denmark, they have criticised Spain's recent plan to regularise 500,000 undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, which Sánchez's government champions as a liberal and progressive policy. A total of 1.2 million people have applied.

Magnus Brunner, the EU migration commissioner, criticised regularisation as "not a good signal" for Europe, but acknowledged that Brussels "sees no direct link" between the policy and the influx of migrants to Ceuta. He declined to say whether Morocco bore any responsibility, but praised Rabat's co-operation with Spanish authorities on returns.

The EU has increasingly relied on migration agreements with north African countries to curb irregular arrivals, but critics say the approach leaves the bloc vulnerable to pressure from transit countries that can ease, or threaten to ease, border controls in pursuit of political or economic concessions.

With the authorities in Ceuta seeking to regain control, social media platforms were fuelling speculation about another mass crossing on August 15. Dozens of WhatsApp and Facebook groups, with hundreds of thousands of members, have been circulating rumours of a new push towards the territory, alongside advice on routes, border crossings and makeshift boats.

World

Kremlin accused of war crime as drone tries to kill market trader

Ukraine
Marc Bennetts

Kyiv has accused Moscow's forces of a war crime after a video showed a Russian drone attempting to kill a market trader on the streets of Kherson, a besieged city in southern Ukraine.

Video released by Ukrainian police showed a 52-year-old man identified only as Yuriy being chased by an attack drone around a van that had been used to sell fruit and vegetables. The drone strikes and an explosion can be seen. He suffered shock, concussion and shrapnel injuries, police said.

Russian forces regularly target Ukrainian civilians with drones in Kherson in what has been called a "human safari". Video of s being killed or injured by the drones have been posted to Russian pro-war Telegram channels, often accompanied by hip-hop or techno music.

"The world must see this. It must see every piece of evidence that Russia has gone mad, and every instance of the Russian military revelling in the killing and abuse of people," President Zelensky said.

Speaking from hospital, Yuriy said that he and his wife had just begun to lay out their goods for sale when the drone appeared. His wife managed to run off. "I showed it, look, there are vegetables here, but it flew towards me," he said in a video that was published by regional authorities. He also said this was the second time he had been attacked by drones since the start of the war.

Andrii Sybiha, the Ukrainian foreign minister, said the Russian drone pilot responsible for the attack on the market trader was a "sadist".

"This barbaric Russian war crime in Kherson demands international condemnation and justice, but thousands of similar crimes never come to the public eye," Sybiha said. He also called for "a powerful defence and deterrence package for Ukraine, and reliable, guaranteed security".

The city of Kherson was occupied by Russian forces for eight months before being liberated by the Ukrainian army in November 2022.

Video of the attack in Kherson was released by the Ukrainian police

Strikes on Russia's Amazon aim to set economy ablaze

Russia
Catherine Philp Kyiv

Vast grey smoke clouds billowed into the blue skies above the warehouse in Samara, visible for miles around. "All our goods are gone, absolute horror," a weeping woman said on the social media feed where she previously marketed her jewellery. "We woke up to our warehouse in flames. All our stock was inside, we don't know what to do."

The drone strike that set ablaze the Wildberries warehouse in southwestern Russia on Sunday was just the latest against the online retail giant known as Russia's Amazon.

The first, on a huge logistics hub outside Moscow on July 18, killed eight employees and produced a smoke plume so large it was visible from space. Since then, barely two days have passed without another warehouse in flames, burning billions of roubles worth of goods and prompting an online outpouring of despair. Yesterday Wildberries said a warehouse was on fire in Krasny Bor, 20 miles southeast of St Petersburg.

Even more than deep strikes on oil refineries and infrastructure prompting fuel shortages and rationing, Ukraine's campaign against Wildberries is bringing the war into the lives of ordinary Russians.

The company is even more dominant at home than Amazon is in the United States. It accounts for about 50 per cent of online retail in Russia.

Far from merely inconveniencing shoppers, however, the campaign is an audacious attempt to bring down Russia's economy. Wildberries is not only one of Russia's biggest companies but its most indebted, mostly through its partnership with the state-controlled bank VTB.

The Kremlin-allied oligarch Oleg Deripaska has warned that Wildberries's downfall could bring about the collapse of a cascade of Russian banks.

After the opening strikes on Wildberries, President Zelensky declared that the retailer had been judged a military target due to its role in supplying the Russian army with "drone components and other military hardware".

Wildberries swiftly took down a promotional page entitled "everything for the special military operation", the Kremlin's euphemism for the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The catalogue advertised products from body armour and tactical helmets to equipment for allowing civilian drones to carry projectile grenades.

But Zelensky suggested that revenge was also a motivation. The attacks on Wildberries, he said, were a "response to Russian strikes on our civilian infrastructure" after an upsurge of Russian airstrikes, including on facilities belonging to Nova Poshta, a Ukrainian postal company that Moscow claims is also used for military purposes.

TELEGRAM/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

A Wildberries logistics hub in the Ryazan region has been among several hit by Ukraine as Kyiv targets the e-commerce giant

Last week Zelensky's senior adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, gave yet another reason for the Wildberries campaign: to hit its Kremlin-linked creditors, turning more ordinary Russians against the war by making its effects felt at home.

With a turnover of 6 trillion roubles (£59 billion) last year, Wildberries is one of the single largest sources of tax revenue in Russia. "The losses could negatively impact revenues to the Russian budget" Podolyak said.

The outcry from ordinary vendors and customers alike has been extraordinary. Instagram and TikTok have been flooded with videos of suppliers crying at the images of warehouses in flames. Marina Gorshkova, a seller with an Instagram audience of 1.3 million, recorded a video appeal to "the country's leadership", begging for help for one million Wildberries registered vendors. "If we close down, the treasury will stop receiving our taxes, and new entrepreneurs will not spring up like mushrooms," she said.

Valery Filatov, another seller, used the Russian social media network VK to appeal to Wildberries' owner, Tatyana Kim, to use her influence with the Kremlin to stop the war. "Please, let Kim appeal to the president of Russia on our behalf, asking ... to stop the war."

But while the company paid compensation to the families of those killed and some money to those who lost stock in the initial strike, Wildberries was not legally liable for losses, Kim claimed, citing insurance clauses rewritten shortly before the strikes to classify them as "force majeure".

The Kremlin has so far remained silent about the Wildberries campaign, though the government is considering whether it may have to intervene to prop up the company.

Ukraine calls the Wildberries campaign "long-range sanctions", using military means to wage economic war.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Wildberries has become ever more closely integrated with the Kremlin. In June 2024 President Putin gave his personal approval to its merger with Russia's biggest outdoor advertising agency, Russ Outdoor.

After the strike in Samara on Sunday Robert "Magyar" Brovdi, commander of Ukraine's unmanned systems forces, used one of his typically colourful and cryptic Telegram posts to indicate that the attacks would continue.

Residents of the east should not expect their "purple parcels" to arrive, Brovdi wrote. The Samara logistics hub bridges the company's operations in European Russia with those in Siberia. "The wild-berry hub in Samara has malfunctioned and left the chat," he added. "It is certainly not the last blow in this berry brawl."

Additional reporting by Viktoria Sybir

Nato 'a decade behind Putin's forces on the battlefield'

Marc Bennetts

Nato is lagging badly behind Russia and will need more than a decade to match even half of Moscow's battlefield capabilities, Ukraine's former commander-in-chief has warned.

Valerii Zaluzhny, who is now Kyiv's ambassador to Britain, said that Nato was still operating under the illusion that future conflicts would be fought along the lines of the Second World War. "Most likely, Nato will remain in the same form as it is, and will spend 12 years, like Ukraine, transitioning to standards that need to be achieved in order to reach at least half of the level of the Russian Federation," he said at a meeting of Ukrainian ambassadors in Kyiv.

Although he admitted that Kyiv needed air defence systems and other military technology possessed by Nato member states, Zaluzhny said the alliance was still working to "doctrines" that were established during the fight against Nazi Germany. He also suggested that Ukrainian armed forces were superior to those of Nato.

Nato has been accused of failing to fully adapt to the realities of modern battlefields that have been reshaped by the prevalence of drones across the sprawling frontlines in Ukraine. Its weaknesses were highlighted last year during Nato's Hedgehog 2025 exercises in Estonia, which also involved Ukrainian troops. During one scenario, a group of several thousand troops, including a British brigade, was "destroyed" by a team of just ten Ukrainian drone operators, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Valerii Zaluzhny, Ukraine's former top general, is Kyiv's ambassador to Britain

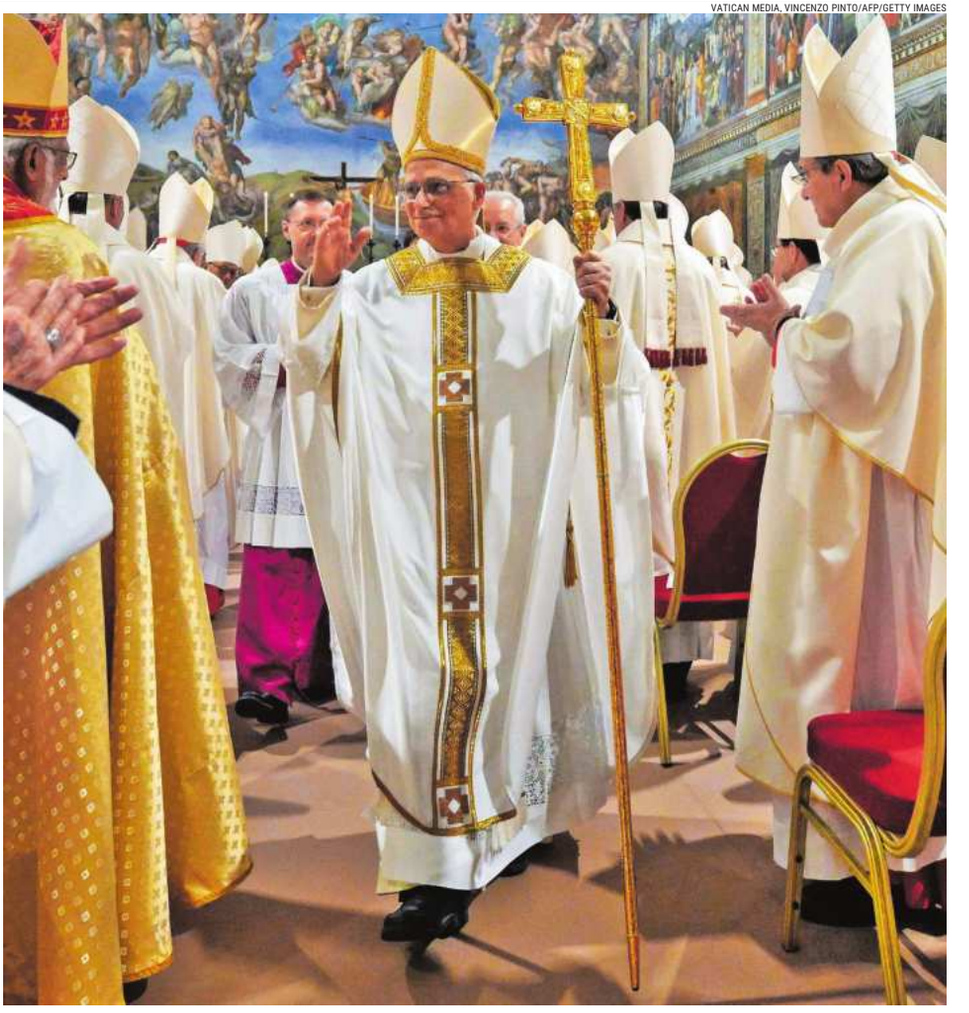
In comments reported by the Kyiv-based European Pravda website, Zaluzhny, who was dismissed as commander-in-chief by President Zelensky in 2024 over differences on how best to fight the war, said that Ukraine would never be allowed to join Nato.

"For about 12 years, I personally worked on adopting Nato standards and every year I listened to fairytales about how we were just on the verge of joining Nato," he said. "Unfortunately, we will never join it."

Zaluzhny's comments came after Russian generals ordered their troops to try and storm Ukrainian positions 8,000 times in July — a record since the start of the war, according to Deep State, a Ukrainian monitoring website.

Filippo Sorcinelli designed the garments worn by Leo for a Mass at the Sistine Chapel the day after his election, as well as Benedict's chasuble for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 2007, below

VATICAN MEDIA, VINCENZO PINTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Stylish popes put faith in 'Versace of the Vatican'

Vatican
James Imam

Widely known as the papal tailor, Filippo Sorcinelli could not have believed that the man standing before him would ascend to the throne of St Peter.

At the time, Robert Prevost was simply a Chicago-born cardinal and prefect of bishops — respected within Vatican circles, but largely unknown to the wider world. A group of Augustinian friars in Vienna had commissioned the tailor to make him a magnificent mitre.

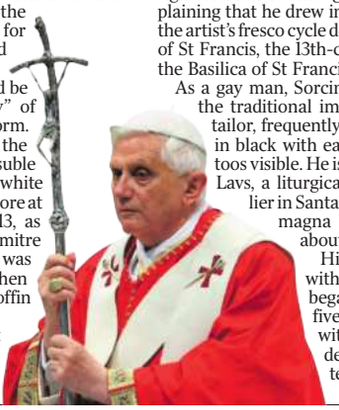
Sorcinelli was granted an audience with Prevost and presented the future pope with the white quilted mitre, lined with silk and adorned with gold crosses and bows made with metallic thread.

"He looked at me with that slightly timid gaze and asked: 'Does it look OK?' " recalls Sorcinelli, 51, of the time he placed the mitre on Prevost's head. "The impression I got was that of a very upright person, very well-educated, and someone who is genuinely capable of engaging with others while maintaining a sense of balance."

A few months later, the same man would step on to the balcony of St Peter's Basilica as the newly elected pope, appearing before an expectant world in the vestments that would offer the first visual clues about his character.

Sorcinelli continues to dress Leo, making him the third pontiff — after Benedict XVI and Francis — whose garments he has designed. His latest creation will be worn during the Pope's visit to Assisi this week.

Sorcinelli first designed for Benedict in 2007 and went on to create about 50 vestments, indulging the German's soft spot for visual richness and traditional detail.



His next task would be the "noble simplicity" of Francis in sartorial form. Sorcinelli designed the white mitre and chasuble embroidered with white crosses that Francis wore at his first Mass in 2013, as well as the white silk mitre edged with gold that was placed on his head when he lay in an open coffin after his death.

"The first thing that came to mind was Giotto," Sorcinelli says of the moment he was asked to design for Francis's inaugural Mass, explaining that he drew inspiration from the artist's fresco cycle depicting the life of St Francis, the 13th-century friar, at the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi.

As a gay man, Sorcinelli challenges the traditional image of a papal tailor, frequently photographed in black with earrings and tattoos visible. He is the founder of Lavs, a liturgical garment atelier in Santarcangelo di Romagna that employs about 40 artisans.

His relationship with Catholicism began when, aged five, he would go with his mother, a devoted volunteer, to the local church. In his twenties, after studying sacred music in Rome he returned home as an organist. He found his way into design almost by accident when a friend said he was to be ordained.

"On the spur of the moment, I told him not to buy anything because I wanted to design and make this first chasuble myself," says Sorcinelli, who made the garments with the help of his sister and aunt, tailors in Mondolfo near Santarcangelo di Romagna.

After Francis's death, Sorcinelli, who still plays the organ, considered stepping back from design. But Leo's election — and his first appearance wearing a red mozzetta, an elbow-length cape largely eschewed by Francis, showed that his services were still in demand.

While Sorcinelli did not design the garments for Leo's first Mass, he has since designed many pieces for him. For his Assisi visit tomorrow, Leo will wear a chasuble and mitre bearing an eight-pointed star, a symbol of the Virgin Mary and the renewal of life, enriched with gemstones including lapis lazuli.

A few years after Sorcinelli had began designing liturgical vestments, a rival revealed his sexuality in an attempt to discredit him. But Sorcinelli says that coming out showed him that the Church can be more permissive and inclusive than often believed.

"The Church has always regarded me as a human being — as Filippo," says Sorcinelli, who has tattooed lines on his body representing a broken mirror, a symbol of living through a hard time.

"You can never do this job unless you have a certain depth of faith, because it requires more than just training," says Sorcinelli. "You need to transform a plain garment into a sacred vestment."

Proust's madeleine theory passes the smell test in lab mice

France
Charles Bremner Paris

Marcel Proust's protagonist marvelled at the "exquisite pleasure" that invaded his senses when he raised a morsel of tea-soaked sponge cake to his lips.

"The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray ... my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or of lime-flower tea," he says in *À la recherche du temps perdu* (In Search of Lost Time).

That key passage from 1913 made "Proust's madeleine" shorthand for a sensual cue to happy childhood memory.

Now a team of neuroscientists from the French National Centre for Scientific Research have enlisted mice to unlock what they believe to be the brain's way of using smell to create "autobiographical" memories that can vividly transport a person back decades.

"We have long known that people retain olfactory memories from childhood, but we had very little information about the neural basis of this phenomenon," said Dr Nathalie Mandairon, a director at the Lyon Neuroscience Research Centre and co-author of the study. "We wanted to understand why, although children are exposed to countless smells, only some of them remain in our memory for the rest of our lives."

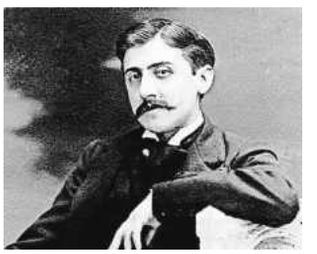
For the study, published in the journal PLOS Biology, more than 600 people were questioned about their childhood memories related to smell and taste. The team then used 272 young mice, which have an olfactory system similar to humans, to create a model of "positive olfactory memory".

"We released pleasant odours while the mice explored an enriching environment containing toys, food and other mice," Mandairon said.

The mice, aged between 23 and 30 days — equivalent to pre-teenage children — voiced their "state of well-being" with high-pitched squeaks.

The researchers found that the mice, once they reached young adulthood, between 60 and 80 days, showed a clear preference for the scent of citronella, which they associated with their juvenile playground. They squeaked happily and spent much more time investigating it than other odours.

Mice that were not given luxury quarters, which included running wheels, cornflakes and playmates, were indifferent to the scent in adulthood. The researchers also found that for the smell to become embedded, the rodents had to be exposed to it regularly in their young days.



Marcel Proust explored how scents can revive happy childhood memories

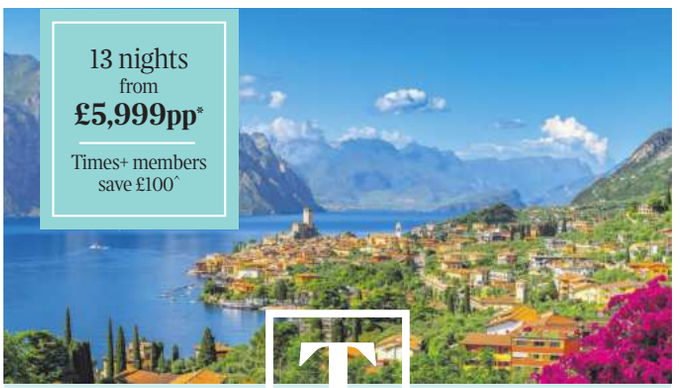
Performing the kind of brain examination that would not be possible for humans, the researchers found that neurons generated around the time of birth in the olfactory bulb played a role that had not been previously known.

"What we have shown is that there are neurons that carry this memory of the smell. They are rather unusual because neurons are usually formed at the birth of the individual," Mandairon said. "These neurons, however, are born later — they develop after birth ... and, moreover, they survive throughout life."

Entering adulthood, the smell memories of childhood then become embedded in the limbic system, the brain's "emotional centre", according to the study. "The increased involvement of this limbic circuit as we grow older may help explain what we see in humans: smell-related memories take on a stronger nostalgic and emotional quality," Mandairon said.

KARISSA HOSEK/RM SOTHEBY'S/JAM PRESS

Hard shell A drivable Volkswagen Beetle made with wrought iron by the Mexican artist Rafael Esparza-Prieto for a PR stunt in 1970 is being sold by RM Sotheby's in California



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Words of hope ring hollow in Gaza ruins

DAWOUD ABU ALKAS/REUTERS

A funeral yesterday for members of a clan killed in an Israeli airstrike in 2023

Gaza

Amal Helles, Richard Spencer
Samer Al-Atrush
Middle East Correspondent

There are so many different versions of Gaza's future that it is easy to forget Gaza's present. Perhaps that is the point.

According to President Trump, the conditions are now set for a new Palestinian government to take over sometime in the future, while ensuring the "security that Israel deserves". At the same time, the Board of Peace that Trump established with help from figures including Sir Tony Blair and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, claimed it had won agreement from all sides on how to implement last year's ceasefire deal.

Meanwhile, on the Hamas side of the coin, the group's newly elected leader also had a message for his subjects, which, in effect, all Palestinians in Gaza continue to be.

Khalil al-Hayya said Hamas would "continue working until we alleviate your suffering and once again see the beautiful and radiant Gaza we once knew". He pledged to "accelerate" reconstruction of the territory, home to two million people.

The reality is starkly different. Yesterday a mass funeral was held for 112 people, all members of the same Gaza clan, the Hussayna, only now recovered from the rubble of their town.

The 112, including about 40 children and 30 women, were among 308 members of the clan killed in an Israeli airstrike on three residential blocks where they were sheltering in Sabra, a district of Gaza City, in November 2023, early in the conflict.

About half of the dead were retrieved immediately. The others had to wait until heavy equipment was able to dig through the rubble.

Most homes in Gaza have been partly or completely destroyed by Israel's forces during the course of two years of war. More than 70,000 Gazans, including fighters, civilian adults and children, were killed, according to the local authorities, since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, in which 1,200 Israelis were killed and more than 250 taken hostage, triggering the conflict.

Gaza's survivors now live in tents or the remains of broken buildings, subsisting on international aid.

For many, Hayya's words, supposedly their beacon of hope, ring hollow. "We were surprised by Khalil al-Hayya's speech, in which he spoke about issues related to our lives and our future in Gaza," said Doaa Bassem, a 26-year-old woman displaced in southern Gaza. "It felt like he was speaking from a different world, which has nothing to do with the reality of displacement that we are living through."

Hayya, who is native to Gaza himself, was elected last month to head Hamas, replacing Yahya Sinwar, who was killed in a confrontation with Israeli soldiers in October 2024.

Sinwar masterminded the October 7 attack, which he hoped would lead to Israel's destruction, but instead it started both a war that destroyed Gaza and a regional conflict that drew in Lebanon and Iran.

Some in Hamas have argued that the group must take stock of the damage the October 7 attack has done to their cause, but Hayya, who survived an Israeli assassination attempt in Qatar last year, is believed to be unrepentant.

Under last year's ceasefire, Hamas is meant to disarm and Israel is supposed to withdraw from the territory. The US-led Board of Peace is then to oversee a massive reconstruction effort masterminded by a new government. But almost a year later, Israel remains in control of almost 60 per cent of the territory, and continues to attack Hamas targets, often killing civilians at the same time. Hamas has entrenched itself in the remaining parts, saying it will dissolve its government in favour of a new Palestinian authority but not disarm until Israel withdraws.

Last weekend, after the announcement by the Board of Peace and Trump of their new "implementation" agreement, Israel continued to insist that it would only start to withdraw after Hamas was disarmed.

That re-establishes the existing stalemate, and the continuing questions to Hayya and the international community from the residents left helpless in Gaza's rubble.

"How does [Hayya] intend to pressure the international community to rebuild Gaza after the enormous destruction it has suffered?" asked Mohammed Suhweil, 67, a pharmacist displaced along with his family of ten in Khan Yunis in south Gaza. "We want to understand how he believes reconstruction can happen."

Both Hamas and Israel appear satisfied by the frozen conflict that has left them in control of their two parts of Gaza, while its inhabitants live in limbo. "There's no difference between today and months ago," said Ahmed Fayez, a father of seven.

Last night Hamas said it was considering withdrawing from the Board of Peace agreement because of Israeli strikes. "We are weighing our options regarding the next steps," a senior political official said. "Everything is on the table."

Teenager 'raped by staff member at Club Med'

South Africa A Canadian teenager has allegedly been raped by a member of staff at South Africa's first Club Med resort, only weeks after the luxury hotel opened on the Dolphin Coast. The 18-year-old said the suspect, an employee in a guest-facing role, plied him with alcohol before taking him to the staff quarters and raping him while he was incapacitated. The accused, 35, a Club Med employee from France, where the all-inclusive family holiday chain originated, is in court in Durban this week for a bail hearing after his arrest on July 23. He told the court the sexual encounter was consensual.

Tourists hurt after camel gets the hump on beach

Australia Two tourists were taken to hospital after a camel bucked its passengers during a sunset tour on a beach in Broome, western Australia. The animal was part of a group carrying tourists when it suddenly broke off the main party. Video footage on social media showed passengers trying to hold on before they were bucked off. A woman in her sixties was later said to be in a stable condition in hospital. The other was discharged. Chris Mitchell, a local councillor, said camel rides, which cost up to A€90(£50), were a "much-loved part of the Broome experience" and that such incidents were rare.

DiCaprio and Bezos to save endangered animals

United States Leonardo DiCaprio and Jeff Bezos are teaming up on a $200 million mission to revive 100 of Earth's most threatened species. The Hollywood star's Re:wild campaign and the Amazon billionaire's Bezos Earth Fund will lead the Phoenix Species Project, which will distribute grants with the aim of protecting endangered animals including lemurs, salamanders, pangolins, pigs and echidnas. Tiana Andriamanana, executive director of a charity dedicated to saving the golden-crowned sifaka, a lemur from Madagascar, said the funding would "change what is possible".

Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
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Dow Jones
54,085.88 (+907.47) ▲

COMMODITIES

Gold
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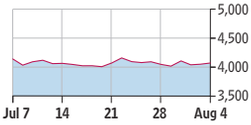
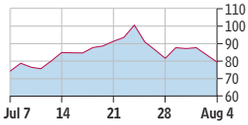


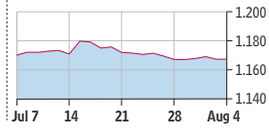
Brent crude (6pm)
$79.80 (-3.73) ▼



CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.3456 (-0.0022) ▲

£/€
€1.1673 (+0.0001) ▲



AI start-up Volta goes from zero to $2.4bn valuation in six months

James Hurley

A six-month-old start-up aiming to build an artificial intelligence data centre in Norway has agreed a $10 billion deal with Anthropic and raised funds from backers including Nvidia at a $2.4 billion valuation.

Volta Infrastructure Holdings, which is based in London and was incorporated in January by a former Brookfield Asset Management employee, secured a data centre agreement with Anthropic, the AI group behind the Claude chatbot. Volta says it "develops, finances, builds and operates" AI data centres, or "AI factories" as it calls them.

It says it brings together finance, land with local power supply, data centres and the hardware and software required by the AI industry "under a single platform".

Backers including Azora, a Spanish investment firm, Andreessen Horowitz, the Silicon Valley venture capital firm, and Altimeter, a technology investor, have invested in the business, it said, as well as Nvidia, the computer chipmaker. The family office of Michael Dell, the billionaire founder of Dell Technologies, has also invested.

Its valuation is roughly two fifths that of Balfour Beatty, the 117-year-old FTSE 250 international infrastructure group which has about 26,000 staff and had revenues of £10.8 billion last year.

Volta says it has about 100 staff across sites in London as well as Palo Alto, California, and New York. It may not file its debut set of accounts until the end of September next year.

Ricard Boada Rafart, 33, set up Volta with £1 of share capital in January, company filings show.

Boada is a former senior vice-president at Brookfield Asset Management's infrastructure group, where he had experience of working on AI infrastructure deals, including a $5 billion partnership between Brookfield and Bloom Energy to power AI data centres. He left Brookfield in January, according to his profile on LinkedIn.

Volta's first project is a planned AI factory in Norway to be powered by Nvidia systems, part of the $10 billion partnership with Anthropic. Volta declined to answer questions about the status of its projects but said it had a "broader near-term development pipeline" in North America and Europe.

Volta also noted that Azora had established a $5 billion AI infrastructure programme to finance AI factories that Volta will develop.

The deal echoes backing for Nscale, another London-based data centre start-up that has attracted attention for its $14.6 billion valuation and its relatively modest scale.

Revenues up 92 per cent for SpaceX

Shares fall early on first results since float

Louisa Clarence-Smith
US Business Editor

SpaceX beat Wall Street's revenue expectations in its first earnings report since achieving a record-breaking initial public offering.

Elon Musk's satellite, rockets and artificial intelligence company reported a 92 per cent rise in second-quarter revenue to $7.8 billion, ahead of analysts' estimates of $6.8 billion on average. The company's net loss for the quarter narrowed to $541 million, from $1 billion a year earlier.

However, shares in SpaceX, which floated at $135 in mid-June, were trading down $8.49, or 6.9 per cent, to $116.77 in after-hours trading on Wall Street, valuing the business at $1.7 trillion. Its stock soared in the first few days following the company's IPO in June, temporarily making Musk the world's first trillionaire but since then SpaceX has lost more than $1 trillion in market capitalisation.

The stock has come under pressure amid worries about the impact of the end of a lock-up on August 6, when some employees and early investors in SpaceX will be able to sell their shares.

Investors have also been seeking more clarity around the AI business and a potential merger with Tesla, Musk's electric vehicle business.

Musk, 55, started SpaceX as an aerospace manufacturer and space transportation services company based in Hawthorne, California, in 2002 with the goal of reducing rocket launch costs to enable the colonisation of Mars. He has grown SpaceX into the world's largest rocket business by launching thousands of Starlink internet satellites and pioneering reusable rockets that transformed the economics of space travel.

The world's richest man has even more ambitious plans to build a city on the moon and put data centres in space.

Most of its revenue last year came from its Starlink satellite internet business. The latest results showed the internet service continued to drive growth, delivering $4.3 billion in the second quarter, up 66 per cent on the comparable quarter last year.

SpaceX said it reached 12 million subscribers by the end of the second quarter in 2026, doubling from last year. It also announced it has been awarded over $6 billion in US government contracts for a version of Starlink called Starshield, which provides a classified and encrypted signal.

SpaceX's AI business, which includes xAI, Grok, social media platform X and a data centre operation, has been its biggest area of investment. AI revenue rose 247 per cent annually to $2.56 billion while losses narrowed to $1.3 billion, from $1.5 billion a year earlier.

Space revenue grew 29 per cent year on year to $962 million, while losses widened to $542 million from $369 million. The division includes commercial launches, government missions and development of Starship. SpaceX said space revenues were supported by a "higher number of large customer launches" compared with a year earlier.

CLÝ DE PEAU BEAUTÝ/CAPTURE MEDIA GROUP

Hat trick The Japanese luxury skincare brand Clé de Peau Beauté has released a series of new films with its brand ambassador, the actress Nicole Kidman

Bank allows staff to work from abroad

Robert Miller

More than 1,000 staff at the Bank of England spent a total of 12,889 days working overseas under its remote work policy, according to new freedom of information data.

Some 6,000 staff are eligible to work for up to 40 days overseas as well as being allowed to work from home for three days a week, according to the central bank's official guidance.

A spokesman for the central bank said: "The Bank's working-from-abroad policy is in place for staff who temporarily work outside the UK.

"As an organisation with a significant international make-up, we recognise that colleagues may at times need to spend short periods overseas.

"Due to continued investment in modern technology and secure systems, staff are able to carry out their roles effectively while they are working remotely.

"The policy is subject to time limits and other conditions, including security-related restrictions, and staff are required to fulfil their usual duties and responsibilities professionally and effectively."

The latest publicly available staff handbook, which outlines the Bank's policy, states: "The Bank is committed to supporting colleagues working flexibly and allows colleagues to work from abroad for a maximum of 40 working days a year."

The revelations, first reported by the Telegraph, that so many staff have worked from overseas comes as the Bank is under intense scrutiny as its monetary policy committee, which sets interest rates, and other officials wrestle with how best deal to deal with inflation and the energy price shock.

Last week the central bank's nine-strong committee voted 6 to 3 in favour of holding the cost of borrowing at 3.75 per cent after inflation in June was 2.6 per cent against the official target of 2 per cent.

Need to know

1 Ministers are drawing up plans to boost economic growth by increasing government borrowing in order to spend the money on new infrastructure, housing and support for business. Under the fiscal rules, the government is allowed to count spending on infrastructure or equity in companies as "assets" to be offset against the cost of borrowing. Page 1

2 Volta, a six-month-old start-up in London aiming to build an artificial intelligence data centre in Norway, has agreed a $10 billion deal with Anthropic and raised funds from backers including Nvidia at a $2.4 billion valuation. Page 31

3 More than 1,000 staff members at the Bank of England spent a total of 12,889 days working overseas under its remote work policy, Freedom of Information data reveals. Page 31

4 Higher prices more than doubled BP's profits to $5.7 billion in the second quarter, as Meg O'Neill, its new chief executive, vowed to disregard "sentiment" and "history" in her overhaul of the group.

5 Segro, the biggest property company on the London stock market, has accepted a £14.3 billion offer from Prologis, an American rival, after pressure from investors to accept the biggest takeover of a FTSE company this year.

6 HSBC announced a $1 billion share buyback after profits in the second quarter rose by 23 per cent to $19.5 billion, beating City expectations. Page 34

7 The FTSE 100 medical devices company Smith & Nephew has cut its full-year revenue growth forecast due to weak demand for knee implants in the US, its biggest market. Page 37

8 Palantir Technologies has thrown down the gauntlet in the battle to dominate enterprise software, claiming its customers were shunning AI model makers such as Anthropic and it was seeing "otherworldly" sales growth for its data analytics platforms. Page 38

"Andy Burnham's appointments to key economic positions have been reassuring

David Wighton, **page 35**

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BP doubles profits as new chief pushes on with overhaul

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Higher prices more than doubled BP's profits to $5.7 billion in the second quarter, as its new chief executive vowed to disregard "sentiment" and "history" in her overhaul of the group.

Meg O'Neill insisted, however, that moving the company's listing from the London Stock Exchange was "really not on the agenda", despite last week's announcement that it was preparing to quit the UK North Sea after more than 60 years.

O'Neill said the North Sea was simply not "competitive" with other parts of the world and that even cutting the high oil and gas taxes in the UK would not change its mind about selling, citing years of instability in the fiscal regime.

BP said that it also planned to sell Archaea, the US biogas business it bought for $4 billion less than four years ago, as it continues its retreat from green energy.

O'Neill, who took the top job in April, said: "Our performance over the past few years has not met our own expectations, let alone those of our shareholders." She said BP had to "get fit to grow" and vowed to keep "simplifying the portfolio based on value, not sentiment nor history", adding: "Some assets may have been important to BP in the past. That does not necessarily mean they are the right assets for BP's future."

She said BP still saw "growth potential" in the North Sea and would "love to see exploration resume".

"The challenge from an investment perspective is the dollars to the North Sea are just not as competitive as other opportunities," O'Neill said.

"We've had, unfortunately, a number of fiscal regime changes over the last 20 years. One of the things that's most important for us when we think about making investment decisions is we want confidence that we'll have stability over the 20 years that it takes to deplete an asset that we develop."

The decision prompted renewed speculation over whether the American could move BP's primary listing from London to New York, as it becomes increasingly focused on the United States. Shell, BP's rival, has previously considered but rejected such a move, while a number of other companies, such as Ferguson and Flutter, have left London. However, O'Neill told The Times: "Our listing, that's really not on the agenda. We've got plenty of other things to do to get this business in shape."

She was speaking as BP reported its highest quarterly profit in four years, significantly beating analysts' expectations of $5.1 billion and up from $2.4 billion in the same period of 2025.

Brent crude averaged $103.85 per barrel in the second quarter of 2026, up from $67.88 per barrel in the same period a year earlier. Prices were boosted by the US war with Iran, which resulted in the shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes.

O'Neill joined from Australia's Woodside to become BP's first outsider chief executive in its 117-year history and the first woman to lead any of the oil supermajors.

She is accelerating its strategic U-turn away from green energy after an ill-fated foray into renewables under its former boss Bernard Looney. The Archaea biogas purchase was the biggest acquisition of his tenure. O'Neill vowed to "deliver a step change in performance and grow shareholder value" by strengthening the balance sheet, simplifying the portfolio, investing with greater discipline, and improving operations and accountability.

Asked about BP's retreat from renewables, she told CNBC that "climate change is an important global challenge and everybody has a role to play" but said that some of its investments had simply not "delivered the returns that we expect".

BP is said to be close to finalising the planned sale of Lightsource BP, the solar company, which it only fully acquired two years ago.

Other companies were better placed to manage investments in things like solar plants, O'Neill said, and BP would instead focus on "reducing the emissions intensity of our business" with projects such as building green hydrogen facilities at its refineries.

BP is aiming to reduce net debt to between $14 billion and $18 billion by the end of 2027 but said it now expected to hit that goal this year. Net debt fell to $22.3 billion at the end of the second quarter.

The company has said it is pursuing a target of $20 billion of divestments by the end of next year. Kate Thomson, chief financial officer, said it expected to reach $15 billion to $16 billion of divestments by the end of this year but that it was not "selling assets at any price to hit a divestment target" and the balance sheet was far more important.

O'Neill's tenure had already seen BP grab the headlines with the abrupt ousting of its chairman Albert Manifold in May. BP cited "serious concerns" relating to "important governance standards, oversight and conduct", stemming from allegations of bullying by BP employees. Manifold has denied the claims, which he has described as "lies".

O'Neill declined to be drawn further on Manifold's departure.

BP shares rose initially but retreated with the falling oil price to close down 27¼p, or 4.9 per cent, at 525p.

● Oil prices fell to the lowest level in three weeks on hopes of a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, as President Trump accused the US oil companies ExxonMobil and Chevron of making "too much money" from the crisis. Brent crude, the global benchmark price, fell almost 6 per cent to less than $79 a barrel after the US administration and mediators from Qatar indicated there was progress on reopening the waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes. Oil and gas prices have been high since the US and Israel launched their attacks on Iran on February 28.

BP had pivoted to renewables after pressure over global warming, including protesters boarding an oil rig in 2019

Behind the story

Those who knew Meg O'Neill before she joined BP predicted she would be "merciless" with underperforming parts of the business (Emily Gosden writes). Sure enough, the message that came through loud and clear from the no-nonsense American yesterday was that there would be no sacred cows as she overhauls the oil major.

O'Neill pledged repeatedly to disregard sentiment, history and legacy attachment in the clear-eyed and clinical pursuit of value.

Offloading the UK North Sea business, with its ageing fields and hostile, unpredictable tax regime, makes logical sense for a company that needs money to invest in big new discoveries with far more

Segro accepts £14bn takeover offer from US rival

James Hurley Assistant Business Editor

The biggest property company on the London stock market has accepted a £14.3 billion offer from an American rival after pressure from investors to accept the biggest takeover of a FTSE company this year.

Segro, which owns 117 million sq ft of space in Europe, had rejected three approaches from Prologis but said last month that it was minded to back a "best and final proposal".

Yesterday both companies said the offer had been accepted. Segro's shares rose 13¾p, or 1.4 per cent to 974¾p, after the announcement below the takeover price of up to £10.54 per share. Prologis shares were down by 2.5 per cent in trading in New York.

Segro is one of the largest owners of data centres and warehouses in Europe with a £12 billion portfolio, including the Slough trading estate made famous by Ricky Gervais's sitcom *The Office*.

David Sleath, its longstanding chief executive, told The Sunday Times in July that the business had "a very good long-term growth story" on its own but it succumbed after four higher offers from Prologis, including one worth about £13.5 billion.

Investors including APG Asset Management, Norges Bank and CCLA Investment Management had urged the companies to engage in talks, saying a combination would be valuable. They were approached for comment.

The deal adds to a record year for mergers and acquisitions in the UK and is the second biggest after Unilever's $65 billion food business merger, announced in March.

It ranks among the biggest foreign takeovers of a UK-listed company on record, London Stock Exchange Group data showed. "Prologis and Segro believe the combination offers a compelling opportunity to Segro shareholders," the companies said in a statement.

As of Monday, Segro and Prologis had a combined market capitalisation of more than $150 billion.

Prologis, a logistics property investor based in San Francisco, counts Amazon, FedEx and UPS among its customers. Prologis and Segro have been building a data centre pipeline to exploit the boom in artificial intelligence investment.

Andrew Saunders, equity analyst at Shore Capital, said: "We think there are many wider long-term attractions that being part of Prologis can offer shareholders, including significantly greater scale, global reach, bigger balance sheet, third-party capital and more highly resourced capabilities in development, data centres and power sourcing."

Sleath said: "Prologis shares our conviction in the long-term structural drivers underpinning demand for modern logistics and data centre infrastructure.

"We believe the combination would bring together two highly complementary businesses and create a compelling platform, combining Segro's exceptional portfolio and development pipeline with Prologis's existing European business and global scale, customer franchise and operational capabilities."

Segro's roots date to 1920, when the Slough Trading Company bought a military vehicle dumping ground to the west of London, which it later turned into the Slough trading estate.

The offer is at a 42 per cent premium to Segro's closing price on June 23, a day before Prologis went public with its interest. The companies had until August 12 to finalise a deal under UK takeover rules.

KRISTIAN BUUS/GETTY IMAGES

O'Neill pours oil on troubled waters

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

At last, something slicker from BP. Four months in and its new boss Meg O'Neill is already hinting she can walk her no-nonsense talk. When she says "we will high-grade on value creation, not sentiment or history or legacy attachment", what better proof than a decision a newbie UK business leader could easily have ducked — getting out of the North Sea after 60 years?

It probably wasn't the most diplomatic way to start, even if O'Neill has delivered a useful early lesson to Andy Burnham: if you whack a virtue-signalling 78 per cent tax on an industry that, as O'Neill put it, has "unfortunately had a number of fiscal regime changes over the last 20 years", don't be surprised to see capital, jobs and tax revenues flow elsewhere.

Still, like it or not, this is just the sort of clarity BP has been crying out for. Much of the last five years has been spent in a strategic and operational funk, as implied by the arrival on the register of the uppity hedge fund Elliott, with 5 per cent.

O'Neill's predecessor but one, the "performing while transforming" Bernard Looney — part oil man, part Ed Miliband (only with more shagging) — gave us a ham-fisted, capital-destroying lurch greenwards. And, by the time he was booted out after refusing to tell the board of his myriad in-house conquests (rather honourably, too, in some respects as it cost him £32.4 million pay), no one knew what BP stood for.

His successor, the dour Murray Auchincloss, was never the right boss to answer that. And, even if you may have qualms about BP doubling down on oil and gas when the world is evidently heating up, the business needs a leader with O'Neill's strategic clarity. True, she still couldn't avoid one early drama: the messy removal of the chairman who hired her, Albert Manifold, over "bullying" claims, which Manifold denies. Still, if a new chief executive is going to knife the chairman, better to do it early.

Anyway, the result? A clear five-point plan on her fix for BP. So far, O'Neill has been lucky with higher Iran war energy prices. Underlying profits hit $5.7 billion in the second quarter, up by $2.5 billion, with operating cash flow at $10.9 billion: pretty helpful when her first priority is to "strengthen the balance sheet". Net debt fell $3.1 billion to $22.3 billion, with BP now expecting to hit its target of $18 billion or below this financial year — 12 months early.

Her other priorities span North Sea-style simplification, with O'Neill emphasising that "every part of the company needs to earn its place"; improving below-par operations; "hardwiring high-performance and accountability into BP"; and "investing with greater discipline". In short, a Shell playbook to bring through-the-cycle resilience, where her rival is several years ahead.

As a plan for better performance, it's hard to disagree with O'Neill's approach — even if the shares fell 5 per cent to 525p as oil prices slipped. She may be right, too, that there are better owners for Archaea, the US biogas outfit Looney bought in 2022 for $4.1 billion that's already been partly written down among $5 billion of green impairments.

Yet, longer-term, one question nags: will BP eventually need more strategically than a big pivot back to oil and gas? Or will it just burn itself out with them, as demand finally falls, handing back the cash?

Having posed this question last week of Shell, to brickbats from some readers, it still seems apt. Yes, the world will need fossil fuels for decades. But, having screwed up with Looney, BP's alternatives will soon largely be down to sustainable aviation fuel, green hydrogen and carbon capture and storage. It's not as if getting ahead of a market can't prove a real value creator either — just ask the world's richest man, Tesla's Elon Musk. It's yet to be seen if O'Neill has more in her strategic barrel than an oilier, better run BP.

Take a flyer

No-brainer growth projects do not fly in every day. So it always seemed odd that, instead of latching on to Gatwick's £2.2 billion second runway, Rachel Reeves made her No 1 economic expansion scheme something we've been failing to build since 1968: Heathrow's third runway jamboree, a legal minefield complete with digging up the M25 and a price tag that's now hit an insane £49 billion.

Happily, unlike the grounded former chancellor, the Gatwick project is at last airborne, having got through its final legal challenge. It's everything the Heathrow scheme isn't: cheap, deliverable and capable of being built within the airport's boundaries, with no need to reroute Europe's busiest motorway or flatten (at least) 752 homes. Neither are the passengers getting stiffed on the landing charges to pay for it.

The upshot? The Gatwick plan, which upgrades an existing standby runway, is poised to create 14,000 jobs, add £1 billion economic value a year and lift passengers from today's 43 million a year to 75 million by the late 2030s — and all privately financed, too, by Gatwick's owners, Vinci Airports and BlackRock's Global Infrastructure Partners.

Of course, people have a right to object. But the other mystery is why it's taken eight years and £70 million costs for Gatwick to get the go-ahead here. If Burnham is serious about growth, do-able projects need a far quicker route to take-off.

Second fiddle

One reason for the Segro board caving into Prologis? That its £14 billion offer at £10.32 per share came with a "commitment to a secondary listing" on the UK exchange. So, a timely point from Claire Trachet, boss of M&A advisory firm Trachet. She's noted that in "the past 105 days" four US-listed companies have axed their secondary listings in London: CRH, Smurfit WestRock, Ferguson and Flutter Entertainment. Enjoy the Prologis one while it lasts.

alistair.osborne@thetimes.co.uk

attractive tax terms, like last year's mega-find at Bumerangue off Brazil.

But it is undoubtedly an easier decision to make for O'Neill, BP's first outsider chief executive in its 117-year history, than it would have been for her two predecessors, Murray Auchincloss and Bernard Looney, who both spent stints running the North Sea business.

Selling Archaea, the landfill gas business bought for $4.1 billion almost four years ago, when Looney was chief executive and Auchincloss his chief financial officer, would certainly have been awkward for Auchincloss even as he reversed many other green commitments for which he was the co-pilot. As a new broom, O'Neill has been able to move swiftly to prepare these assets for sale and to admit BP had made decisions in the past that wasted shareholders' money. She also highlighted that its operational performance had fallen short and costs remained "stubbornly high".

Nonetheless, the five objectives she set out — to strengthen the balance sheet, simplify the portfolio, invest with discipline, improve operations and strengthen accountability — are hardly a million miles removed from the aims Auchincloss set out in his "fundamental reset" of the strategy in February 2025, when strengthening the balance sheet and "relentlessly pursuing performance improvements" was the order of the day. With O'Neill four months into the job, her predecessor takes some of the credit for the fact BP expects to meet its net debt reduction target a year early.

As Biraj Borkhataria of RBC Capital Markets puts it, O'Neill's priorities "could come under the general bucket of 'do better'" and she needs to "walk the talk". O'Neill has to show that her merciless streak can not only help her streamline the portfolio with eye-catching disposals but also enable her to do a better job in running the day-to-day business.

Pilots sue Ryanair over 'withheld' holiday pay

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Hundreds of pilots who flew for Ryanair are suing the budget airline over claims that they are owed unlawfully withheld holiday pay.

A group claim has been filed in the commercial court in London, led by Richard Phillips and joined by 261 additional claimants. Phillips is understood to have worked for Ryanair for four years until 2012 before moving to British Airways.

Two aviation recruitment agencies are also named as defendants — Storm Global and Brookfield Aviation International — as well as Scanlon Associates, a tax consultancy based in Dublin.

Lawyers for the claimants said the lawsuit had come after a Court of Appeal ruling last year which found that a Ryanair pilot was a worker when flying for the airline and not self-employed.

In that case, Jason Lutz, a contracted pilot for Ryanair who was based at Stansted, told the appeal judges he had requested the airline employ him directly but bosses refused.

He was then given a five-year contract that was subject to three months' notice, which the court said meant he was a "temporary" worker under the Agency Workers Regulations 2010.

The regulations stipulate that after 12 weeks agency workers are entitled to equal treatment with employees regarding basic and holiday pay.

Claims Compensation Group, the law firm representing Phillips and the others against the Irish airline, said that the Lutz ruling was a test case that had "closed the door" on the "agency defence in aviation".

The firm said the appeal judge had "confirmed that worker status under the protective legislation is wide and inclusive in a tripartite agency relationship, and that a fixed-term supply of five years still meets the statutory test of working temporarily for the hirer".

The lawyers said Ryanair was refused permission to take the dispute to the Supreme Court and that as a result, the appeal "judgment is final".

Claims Compensation Group said it was "acting for pilots who were engaged by Ryanair via agencies, and claiming workers' rights for the entire period of engagement". It did not note how much the claim is estimated to be worth. According to High Court filings, the claim was issued last month but no pleadings have yet been registered.

Neither Ryanair nor any of the other defendants had registered law firms to act for them if they decided to defend the claim. None of the defendants responded to requests for comment.

An old mapper finds new treasure

Britain's Ordnance Survey is taking the fight to Google and Apple after notching up record annual revenue as demand surges for trusted location data (Isabella Fish writes).

The state-owned national mapping agency reported revenue of £198.7 million in the year to March, up 2.1 per cent on the previous year. It was its tenth consecutive year of growth as businesses and government increasingly come to rely on its digital mapping data.

The results underline how Ordnance Survey (OS), best known for its folded paper maps, has transformed into one of the UK's most important data businesses. Today, paper maps account for only about 5 per cent of revenue as the agency generates income from the digital location data that underpins everything from emergency services and utility networks to property transactions and logistics.

The shift also puts it in more direct competition with the mapping systems built by Google and Apple. While consumers use Google Maps or Apple Maps to navigate, OS has positioned itself as the provider of the authoritative location data that governments, infrastructure operators and regulated industries depend on when accuracy matters.

A triangulation pillar from Ordnance Survey, which is led by Nick Bolton, below

At the heart of that strategy is what Nick Bolton, its chief executive, describes as growing demand for "trusted location data" at a time when both the public and private sectors are making more data-driven decisions.

"This year marked the 225th anniversary of our first map, and today, OS continues to innovate to meet the evolving needs of the nation," he said.

"This demand for trusted location data has delivered another year of growth, and with a six-year programme to build our data foundation complete, our focus now is on making data more accessible to more people and organisations."

Founded in 1791 to map British coastlines for the military, OS now maintains the National Geographic Database, a digital map containing more than 600 million geographic features.

An economic impact assessment found OS is expected to generate £10.6 billion of economic value in the decade to 2029-30.

Much of this year's growth came from long-term partnerships with government. One of the biggest is the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement, a ten-year, £1 billion programme funded by the government that gives about 6,000 public sector organisations free access to OS's mapping data.

The agreement allows local authorities, emergency services, the NHS and government departments to use the same location data when planning infrastructure, responding to emergencies or delivering public services.

HSBC resumes $1bn share buyback after profits jump

Helen Cahill Financial Correspondent

Europe's largest bank has announced a $1 billion share buyback after profits rose by 23 per cent to $19.5 billion.

HSBC has resumed share buybacks after beating City expectations for the second quarter amid a restructuring under its chief executive Georges Elhedery.

London's largest listed company had paused buybacks last October after announcing its £10 billion acquisition of Hang Seng Bank.

HSBC's results come as unions call for an increase to the tax applied to bank profits to fund lower energy costs for households. In the UK, reported profit before tax at HSBC rose by 8.3 per cent to $3.9 billion.

Elhedery highlighted the bank's importance to the UK economy, echoing comments made by other chief executives delivering similarly positive results last week.

"We've been particularly focused on increasing support for [small businesses] with 11 per cent year-on-year growth in loans and advances to our business banking customers in the first half," he said. "We continue supporting international investment into the UK economy through our powerful global network, enabling UK exporters to capture the newly-signed [free trade agreements]."

The bank said its bid to simplify its sprawling operations would deliver cost savings of $2 billion, up from $1.5 billion previously, after recently announcing the sale of divisions in Singapore and Egypt. Elhedery has also shut parts of HSBC's investment banking operations in the UK, Europe and the US as part of the restructuring.

GETTY IMAGES

Emma Raducanu at the HSBC Championships at Queen's Club in London in June

"HSBC is becoming the stronger bank we set out to build. We are executing our strategic priorities with pace, precision and discipline," Elhedery said. "This is allowing our four businesses to focus on their core strengths, grow, work together more effectively and deepen customer relationships. The result is a bank capable of achieving more."

The FTSE 100-listed group's revenues rose by 11 per cent to $37.7 billion in the first half, from $34.1 billion, while profit before tax rose to $19.5 billion from $16 billion.

HSBC said the profit increase came after a drop-off in exceptional charges, which came to $2.2 billion during the first half of last year, as well as higher revenues, particularly from its wealth and wholesale banking divisions.

Wealth fees and other income were up by 20 per cent, while wholesale and transaction banking income increased by 7 per cent.

Gary Greenwood, an analyst at Shore Capital, said "operational execution remains strong" and that HSBC's shares had "performed exceptionally well" since May.

So far this year, HSBC's shares have gained more than 30 per cent.

HSBC was the last of Britain's big four banks to report its results, and the update prompted the Trades Union Congress to renew its push for an additional surcharge of up to 35 per cent on profits.

Paul Nowak, general secretary of the TUC, said: "There is now a mountain of evidence to suggest that banks can easily afford to pay more tax. While higher interest rates have meant mortgage misery and bigger bills for the rest of us, the big banks have been rolling in it.

"Andy Burnham has rightly prioritised cost of living measures in his first days as prime minister, but as the war in Iran rumbles on energy prices will rise further and the government will need to do more to protect households. That's why it's time to increase the tax on bank profits to cut bills."

Elhedery provided details of the lender's contribution to economic growth alongside the results, highlighting the importance of its regional operations and heritage; the bank traces its presence in the UK market to its purchase of Midland Bank in 1992.

He said more than 60 per cent of the bank's loan portfolio is tied to businesses operating outside London.

"We're very, very encouraged by the government's ambition to support and enable growth in the UK, which, of course, we have a major role to play in," he added.

"For growth to be able to manifest, you need businesses to be confident and invest. For businesses to invest, you need them to have access to financing, and we as a banking sector, with a strong balance sheet and strong capital position, are the preferred financing mechanism for the businesses."

HSBC shares were down 12¾p, or 0.8 per cent, to £15.84½ yesterday.

Record results at Metro Bank as it pledges new branches

Helen Cahill

Metro Bank has posted the highest half-year profits in its history as it continues to restore operations three years after it was spared bankruptcy by a Colombian billionaire.

The FTSE 250-listed lender reported that statutory profit before tax rose by 34 per cent to £60.7 million in the six months to the end of June, with underlying revenue up by 5 per cent to £301 million.

Its net interest margin, the difference between what it charges customers for loans and pays out on deposits, rose to 3.18 per cent from 2.87 per cent.

Metro Bank was founded in 2010 by Vernon Hill, an American entrepreneur noted for posing for photographs outside bank branches with his Yorkshire Terrier, Sir Duffield.

The lender has been progressing with turnaround efforts after it was rescued from the brink of collapse by Jaime Gilinski Bacal, a Colombian banker and entrepreneur, in a £925 million deal in October 2023.

Dan Frumkin, the chief executive, has cut hundreds of jobs, but has also signed three new leases for branches in Leeds, Newcastle and Nottingham, Metro said in a trading update. Frumkin added that the group was looking to open five new branches each year as they are popular with its small and medium-sized businesses customers.

"The thing I'm most pleased with is the strategy we've set out really delivering. It has a way to go and we're not a fully-baked cake yet. We still have a lot of opportunities to go after and we are excited about our future," he said.

The shares closed down 8½p, or 4.7 per cent, at 171¼p.

Graham Ruddick

Innovation puts you ahead of rivals. Paranoia is what keeps you there

Sir Pascal Soriot should be concerned about the future of AstraZeneca. Investors and analysts have questioned why the company is considering a £300 billion tie-up with Bristol Myers Squibb when it is so confident in its pipeline of new drugs and ability to come up with new innovations in the future. Does Soriot have less confidence in the future than we thought?

But that pipeline is exactly why Soriot should be concerned. As Andy Grove, co-founder and former chief executive of Intel, declared in the title of his definitive 1996 management book: *Only the Paranoid Survive*.

AstraZeneca has turned into an innovation powerhouse over the past decade under Soriot, producing a string of drugs that have helped to revolutionise the treatment of cancer. But the patent on those drugs like Imfinzi, Tagrisso and Calquence is ending. From 2031, AstraZeneca will face competition from cheap generic rivals on those products. The company needs innovations and new products to replace the revenues it will lose.

Soriot has repeatedly stressed his confidence in AstraZeneca's team of scientists, who are based in Cambridge, to deliver this. But a blind faith in them would be foolish.

Consider this: over the past couple of years AstraZeneca's success rate in phase three trials — the pivotal final stage for a promising drug — has been 85 per cent to 90 per cent. The industry average is 60 per cent to 65 per cent.

Can AstraZeneca really carry on outperforming at that level? Getting to stage three is an accomplishment itself. "People have got used to us delivering at a high success rate. But we have to accept we will fail from time to time," Soriot said last week.

Business history is littered with stories of once great innovators losing their way, and AstraZeneca does not have to look very far to see one example.

Novo Nordisk is the company that invented weight-loss drugs, with Wegovy. But since that great innovation it has been swamped by rivals launching their own version and struggled to come up with new inventions. Once the most valuable company in Europe, shares in Novo Nordisk have fallen by two thirds since they peaked in 2024.

Mike Doustdar was brought in as chief executive last year and in a new interview with the Financial Times he spoke about the need for the company to take more risks in order to innovate. "If you do not like failure, then you should not get into a pharma business," Doustdar said.

In his 2009 book *How the Mighty Fall*, the author Jim Collins looked at how once-great innovators lost their way. The first stage, he identified, was hubris born of success. One example he gave was Motorola — a business that invented the mobile phone only to be overtaken by Nokia and then Apple. It stood by analogue technology in the 1990s and bet big on its Iridium satellites when it was clear the world was going digital. There was a "cultural shift from humility to arrogance" within the business, Collins said.

Doustdar is well aware of the danger of that happening. He has a sign on his desk that reads: "Arrogance kills."

So the fact that Soriot at AstraZeneca would look at a mega-merger is not necessarily an admission that the company's innovation has lost its way. It is the sort of thinking — a paranoia — that Andy Grove and others have said is necessary for a business to prosper.

Whether a mega-merger is actually the answer for AstraZeneca is a different question. As analysts at UBS pointed out, productivity in research and development tends to go down after a pharma mega-merger because scientists become more worried about losing their job than the next innovation.

Motorola began as an innovator but the move to digital left it behind

Innovation is something that becomes embedded in the culture of a business. It can be disrupted by a change of mindset. As Jack Welch, the former General Electric boss, said: "Innovation is a constant thing. If you don't have an innovative company, coming to work every day to find a better way, you don't have a company. You're getting ready to die on the vine."

Soriot himself has spoken about this as recently as last week. He talked about AstraZeneca needing to operate at "Chinese speed" to avoid falling behind rivals in China.

In his book *Breakneck: China's Quest to Engineer the Future*, the Stanford research fellow Dan Wang looks at what Chinese speed actually is and why the business culture there has become so innovative. It is a society led by engineers, not lawyers like the US, he wrote. And businesses are not only obsessed about products but the process of manufacturing them and how to make it as efficient as possible.

In a recent interview with Harvard Business Review, Wang spoke about the importance of "tacit knowledge" in Chinese business culture. Tacit knowledge is what we know but can't easily put into words — an inherent understanding of how to do something. "This is something that China has possessed a lot of," he said. To illustrate the importance of tacit knowledge, Wang gave the example of handing a well-equipped kitchen and an exquisite recipe to a 15-year-old who has never cooked before. "We cannot expect that 15-year-old to make something as simple as scrambled eggs," he said. "It still requires some degree of training and apprenticeship."

But that is the position the US and Europe find themselves in with manufacturing. "China has been able to keep this industrial experience process knowledge alive," Wang said. "The United States has lost a lot of this experience."

If that sounds like paranoia, it probably is. But that is not a bad thing for a business that wants to compete with China.

Graham Ruddick is Deputy Business Editor of The Times

David Wighton

Business is optimistic about Andy Burnham. Let's just hope it lasts

Business is feeling very bruised by Labour. After years of chaos under the Tories, many business leaders were optimistic about Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves. Some hoped it would be Blair 2.0. Now many are kicking themselves for ignoring the warning signs.

So you might expect they would be very sceptical about Andy Burnham. Some of his comments after gaining the Labour leadership certainly raised red flags. There was his rejection of "four decades of neoliberalism", which offered the unappealing prospect of returning Britain to the 1970s. There was his talk of how Labour was forged in the coalfields, the steel mills and the shipyards. There was a lot about reindustrialisation but nothing about financial services or artificial intelligence.

> 'After the 2024 election many gave Starmer the benefit of the doubt, until employers' national insurance was increased four months later'

Yet, once again, many business leaders are cautiously positive. Some of Burnham's later comments have been more encouraging. His promise to be pragmatic about North Sea oil and gas has gone down well. Business is also generally supportive of the commitment to devolve more power to the regions. Business folk are an upbeat bunch and they like Burnham's optimism.

But it is Burnham's appointments to key economic positions that have been particularly reassuring. "It is really good all round," says the head of government affairs at one of the UK's most influential companies.

Despite the disappointments of the Starmer government, many of the business-focused policies of the Treasury and the Department for Business and Trade had broad support and the signs of continuity have been welcomed.

The highly experienced John Healey is widely seen as a good choice for chancellor. Many business leaders are also enthusiastic about the return of Jonathan Reynolds to head the business department, from which he was moved in last year's reshuffle for no obvious reason.

His position has been bolstered by addition of the science brief following the dismemberment of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. This was widely criticised as a downgrading of science. But some Whitehall watchers, including the former chancellor George Osborne, say it makes sense to put science in a department with more clout.

By bringing Reynolds back to business, Burnham has signalled his commitment to Labour's existing industrial strategy, argues Giles Wilkes, who advised on industrial policy in Theresa May's government.

"This is a relief: business would be justifiably irritated were yet another strategy to be binned, particularly if any vandalism appeared to stem from 'not invented here' syndrome," Wilkes wrote in an Institute for Government blog.

The industrial strategy focuses on a range of growth sectors from advanced manufacturing to financial services, but does not include much of what Burnham conjures up when he talks about reindustrialisation. Burnham has been vague about what he really means by the term and Wilkes hopes it includes service industries, where the UK is highly competitive.

Burnham will doubtless intervene to support "old" industries in specific cases, as Starmer did with the recent nationalisation of British Steel. But Reynolds's appointment suggests Burnham will not seek to use industrial policy to reverse the decline in manufacturing employment, a tough goal even for the self-styled "tariff king" Donald Trump.

After the 2024 election, many business leaders gave Starmer the benefit of the doubt — until employers' national insurance was increased four months later. They are extending the same courtesy to Burnham. Let's hope it lasts beyond this year's budget on October 28.

David Wighton, a former business editor of The Times, is a columnist for Dow Jones

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Knee implants are Smith's weak spot

Charlotte Bend

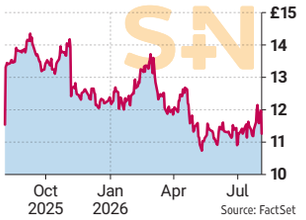
The FTSE 100 medical devices company Smith & Nephew has cut its full-year revenue growth forecast due to weak demand for knee implants in the United States, its biggest market.

The shares fell by 75p, or 6.3 per cent, to £11.22 yesterday after the group said in its first-half results that it now expected full-year revenue growth of about 4 per cent, down from about 6 per cent earlier.

Deepak Nath, Smith & Nephew's chief executive, pictured right, said the company had navigated some challenges with orthopaedics in the second quarter due to "ongoing challenges" in US knee implants before the introduction of new products.

Knees have been a drag on the US business, where it has lost market share to competitors due to supply disruptions. In the past three years, the US business and the orthopaedics division have been overhauled as Smith & Nephew simplifies its portfolio to invest in higher-growth areas and reduce inventory.

Share price



Revenue growth in the second quarter of 1.6 per cent missed analysts' expectations of 3.7 per cent, pulled down by a 7.2 per cent fall in revenue from US knee implants.

After four consecutive quarters of above-market growth, US hip implants revenue fell by 1.5 per cent because of delayed deployment of its surgical instrument kits in the second quarter.

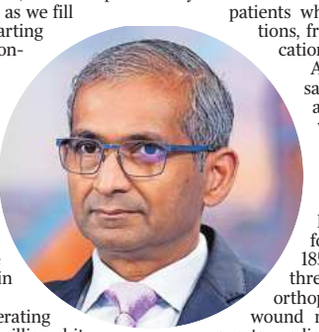
Sales at the advanced wound bioactives business fell by 12.7 per cent in the quarter with "softer-than-expected" performance from Santyl, an ointment used to help wounds heal.

The company expects skin substitutes revenue to stabilise in the second half and normalise in the new year

Despite this, cost savings helped the company to report a 5 per cent rise in first-half pre-tax profit to $380 million on revenue up 4.7 per cent to $3.1 billion. Revenue from knee implants fell 1.8 per cent to $492 million, while revenue from hip implants rose 4.3 per cent to $326 million.

Outside the US, knee implants declined by 1.4 per cent and hip implants performed particularly well in Japan, where the company has recently launched Catalystem, a medical device used for a total hip replacement surgery.

Nath said: "Orthopaedics is not where we want it to be, but we expect growth to accelerate as we fill portfolio gaps, starting later this year and continuing into 2027."



Smith & Nephew also expects US tariffs to be broadly neutral to trading profit after refunds, as it offsets higher raw material prices as a result of the Iran war through price rises and supply chain efficiencies.

First-half operating profits took a $13 million hit from "legal and other" costs, up from $6 million for the same period last year. The charges relate to "ongoing metal-on-metal hip claims". Smith & Nephew has already settled hundreds of lawsuits after recalling a metal liner used in a system that was reported by some patients who suffered infections, fractures and dislocations.

Analysts at Jefferies said the results were a backward step, with the long-awaited operational improvement still lagging.

Smith & Nephew was founded in Hull in 1856. It is made up of three business units: orthopaedics; advanced wound management; and sports medicine and ear, nose and throat. The portfolio medical technology business operates in about 100 countries and employs 17,000 staff.

Lenders threaten Aston over rights deal

Lenders to Aston Martin Lagonda have threatened the struggling luxury carmaker with legal action if a contentious deal to sell part of its branding and naming rights goes ahead (Emma Powell writes).

Aston Martin, which is battling to stabilise its finances, announced last month that it had agreed a £550 million debt financing deal with HPS, a private credit provider owned by BlackRock.

The arrangement has now been challenged by a group of creditors owed £1.3 billion by the FTSE 250 group, who have argued that by putting some assets beyond their reach the deal breaches key terms of Aston's existing debt.

In a letter to the company, the bondholders warned that they may be forced to take legal action that would unwind the financing deal with HPS and block the sale of certain intellectual property assets.

The deal comprises a £450 million term loan and a £100 million facility that can be drawn in future.

Under the terms of the transaction, Aston Martin would transfer 50.1 per cent of its non-automotive intellectual property to Authentic Brands, an American brand developer.

HPS is an investor in Authentic Brands and Aston Martin's ability to access £100 million from the private credit provider is dependent on the branding rights deal taking place. Aston Martin declined to comment.

The company is backed by the Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll, Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund and the Chinese carmaker Geely and has been forced to repeatedly raise money as it fights to stem years of losses.

Aston Martin has said that "the new financing is secured against certain of the group's assets situated in a newly incorporated subsidiary, together with certain other assets of the group", but declined to clarify further what assets had been put outside the bondholders reach.

On an earnings call last week, Doug Lafferty, the chief financial officer of Aston Martin, said the financing deal was "important for the company as a whole".

The company, which is majority-owned by Stroll, sold the permanent naming rights to its Formula One team this year, raising £50 million.

In February it warned that it would cut as many as 600 jobs or 20 per cent of its workforce in Warwickshire and South Wales, part of a target to cut costs by about £40 million, most of which would be stripped out this year.

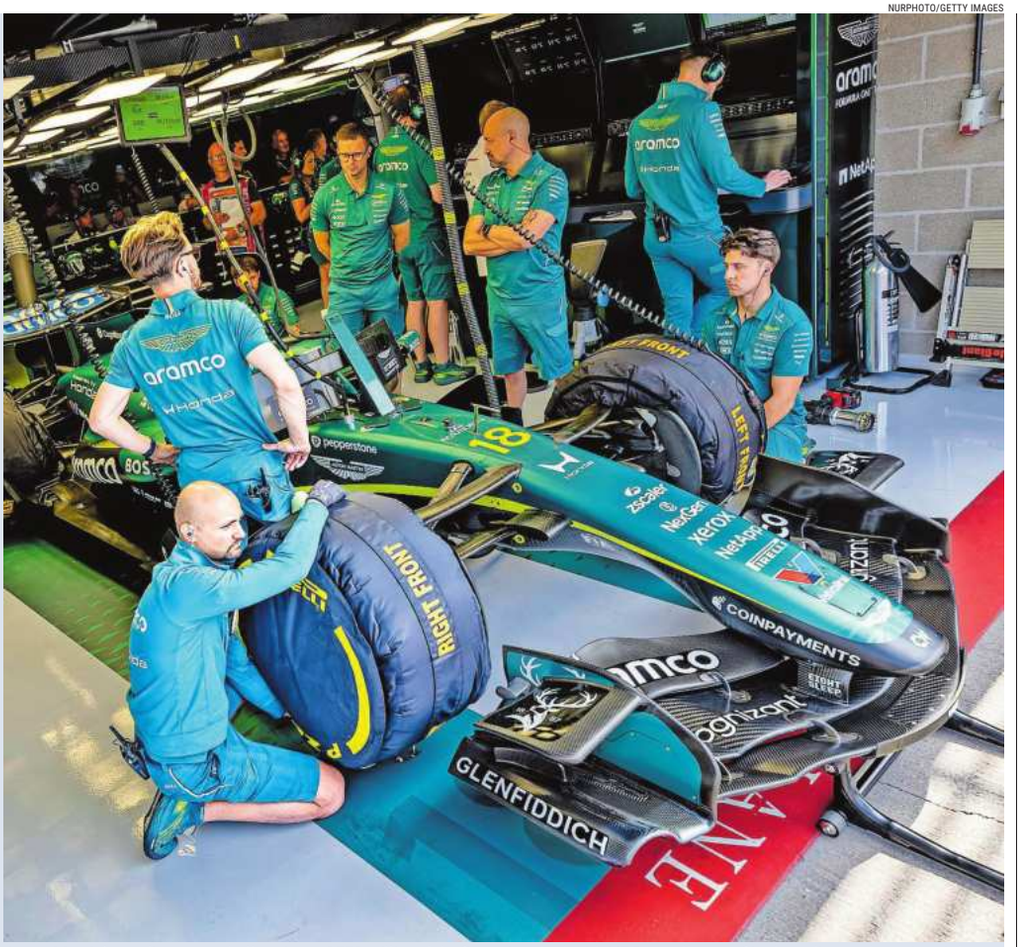
Last year losses climbed to £363 million from £289 million in 2024, as revenue declined by 21 per cent to £1.25 billion on the back of a 10 per cent fall in sales volumes.

In the first six months of the year, revenue improved by 38 per cent to £629 million, but pre-tax losses climbed further to £154 million, from £141 million, exacerbated by higher financing costs. However, the debt financing deal boosted its pro-forma liquidity to £340 million from £145 million, the company said.

Net debt, which has been periodically lowered by the company's frequent cash calls and refinancing, rose again to £1.54 billion at the end of June.

The shares, which have fallen 50 per cent over the past 12 months, closed down ½p, or 1.4 per cent, at 34½p.

NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES



Aston Martin's creditors are challenging a £550 million debt financing deal with HPS to sell part of its branding and naming rights

Travis perks up on talk of Benelux sale

Guy Taylor Retail Correspondent

Travis Perkins has initiated talks with buyers over a potential sale of its struggling operations in the Benelux region of Europe, in a boost for the new management's turnaround efforts.

Shares in Britain's biggest builders' merchant topped London's mid-cap FTSE 250 index after the company said it was in talks with "multiple interested parties" over the divestment of Toolstation Benelux, which had been undergoing a strategic review amid mounting losses. The stock climbed 105½p, or 18.4 per cent, to 678½p, gaining an additional tailwind from accelerating half-year profit growth and further improvements to its cashflow position.

Geoff Drabble, the chairman, and the chief executive Gavin Slark, who joined in January, have been leading a turnaround at Travis Perkins after the shares hit a 16-year low of 494p last year. This has included cutting costs and revamping the senior leadership team.

Pre-tax profit for the six months to June 30 rose to £47 million compared with £37.1 million for the same period a year ago, driven by price rises and more favourable terms on some of its supplier contracts. Net cash before leases was £55.3 million, marking a further increase after the company wiped out its debts earlier in the year to become cash-positive for the first time this century.

Slark said there was some way to go for a full turnaround of the business. "I have developed a clear understanding of our many strengths, but also where we need to improve if we are to restore the group's financial performance and reach our potential," he said.

Revenue declined by 1.8 per cent year-on-year to £2.3 billion as "challenging" market conditions impacted its merchanting segment, which reported a 1.2 per cent decline in like-for-like sales over the period. Adjusted operating profits in the division fell 5 per cent to £60 million, although this was less than analysts had forecast.

Toolstation, whose 550-plus UK stores sell tools and building supplies to trade professionals and DIY builders, reported a 1.7 per cent increase in revenue to £425 million but flat profits of £15 million. Losses at the Benelux division increased to £7 million alongside a 6.1 per cent decline in revenue.

Subscriber numbers are off key for Spotify

ANTONY JONES/GETTY IMAGES

Raye, the British singer/songwriter, performing at the Spotify beach concert in June in Cannes

A warning of weaker profits from Spotify has exacerbated concerns that the music streaming service is struggling to maintain the pace of subscriber growth (Emma Powell writes).

The Stockholm-based group said operating profit for the third quarter was set to come in at €670 million, below a forecast of €678 million, according to consensus estimates compiled by Visible Alpha.

In the second quarter, its operating profit came in at €655 million, beating estimates of €639 million, driven by strong revenue growth and lower payroll taxes. Revenue was 14 per cent higher at €4.8 billion.

User growth is expected to be weaker than Wall Street analysts had forecast for the September quarter, at 788 million, below a consensus estimate of 794 million. Its outlook for a 5 million increase in premium subscribers to 305 million was largely in line with estimates.

The shares were trading $0.70, or 0.1 per cent, lower at $485.79 in lunchtime trading in New York.

The number of monthly active users rose 12 per cent to 777 million in the second quarter, while premium subscribers were up 9 per cent to 300 million.

Spotify has launched artificial intelligence features such as "Personal podcasts" and offerings such as "Reserved by Spotify" to attract users and fend off competition from rivals including YouTube and Netflix and AI music start-ups such as Udio and Suno.

Alex Norström, co-chief executive of Spotify, said: "We have a scale that few companies in history have reached, a business that is healthy and compounding, and opportunities only we are positioned to pursue."

Spotify was founded in April 2006 in Stockholm by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon and launched in 2008. It has since become the world's most popular music streaming service.

Separately, Spotify announced a new agreement with Merlin, the London-based digital music licensing business, for Spotify's upcoming paid tool for fan-made covers and remixing. It will allow artists on labels under Merlin's Spotify agreement to participate.

'Otherworldly' growth at Palantir

Louisa Clarence-Smith
US Business Editor

Palantir Technologies has thrown down the gauntlet in the battle to dominate enterprise software, claiming its customers were shunning artificial intelligence model makers such as Anthropic and it was seeing "otherworldly" sales growth for its data analytics platforms.

Shares in Palantir had jumped almost 30 per cent by lunchtime in New York yesterday after the company raised its full-year sales guidance.

Palantir now predicts annual sales of as much as $8.2 billion, above Wall Street estimates of $7.7 billion on average. It raised its guidance for full-year adjusted income to up to $4.9 billion, from $4.5 billion.

The company is being powered by huge growth in the US, where second-quarter commercial sales rose 149 per cent year-on-year to $764 million, above analysts' estimates of $716.4 million. US government revenue grew by 90 per cent to $809 million.

Palantir, founded in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, builds platforms for managing and securing data and creates applications for machine-assisted analysis.

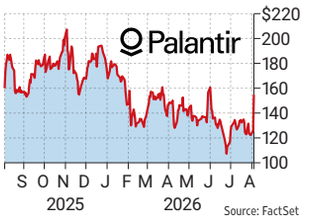
The CIA was an early investor and customers range from companies such as BP, Boeing and Airbus to the US and UK militaries and the NHS.

Before the latest earnings results, Palantir's shares were down 40 per cent from their November peak.

The company was hit by investor fears that AI companies, including Anthropic and OpenAI, will become serious challengers to enterprise software companies.

In response, Palantir launched a "sovereignty" campaign, claiming that companies working with AI models like those sold by Anthropic and OpenAI risk handing over their institutional knowledge, or "alpha", to companies that will eventually turn on them and monetise their knowhow.

Share price



Source: FactSet

In a letter to shareholders published on Monday, Alex Karp, Palantir's chief executive, said: "Every organisation in the world is awakening to the risks of handing the creators of the language models the keys to their institutions, of letting the models loose within their homes." He added: "Our customers have declined to become vassal states of the language labs. And the market is now shifting dramatically underfoot."

Anthropic, which was founded in 2021 and last valued at almost $1 trillion, is estimated to be generating quarterly sales of more than $10 billion and is understood to have posted its first operating profit in the second quarter, at about $560 million.

The maker of the Claude chatbot is preparing for an initial public offering this year as it seeks to tap into investor demand for AI shares.

In an interview with CNBC on Monday, Karp renewed criticism of the AI labs, whose models he has claimed are becoming "commodities" as well as being a risk to businesses' intellectual property.

Anthropic and OpenAI have denied that they have used, or would ever use, their models to steal enterprise intellectual properties.

Diners lose appetite for a McDonald's

Jessica Newman

Sales growth at McDonald's restaurants in the US slowed by more than expected in the second quarter after its value deals failed to sufficiently attract lower-income diners who have been cutting back on spending.

The burger chain said sales in its largest market grew by 0.8 per cent in the three months to the end of June, below Wall Street estimates of 1.06 per cent and some way off the 2.5 per cent growth in the same quarter last year.

Higher prices for basic goods and fuel have left lower-income consumers, a key customer base for McDonald's, with less money to spend on eating out.

Chris Kempczinski, chief executive, insisted the company did not have a "strategy problem". He said: "While our playbook is working around the world, we see an opportunity to raise the bar in the US and accelerate performance in our largest market."

McDonald's, which has about 45,000 restaurants in 100 countries, the majority run by franchisees, reported a 1.3 per cent rise in global comparable sales, slowing from 3.8 per cent a year ago.

Sales in its international operated markets segment, including big European countries, rose by 1.5 per cent, down from 4 per cent a year ago. Analysts expected softer demand in the region as higher energy costs and heatwaves curbed spending on dining out.

In an effort to bring "focus and urgency" to its largest market, McDonald's has appointed Skye Anderson, a company insider, to lead the "acceleration" at its US business.

Kempczinski warned in May that rising macroeconomic uncertainty, including the Iran conflict, was hurting consumer spending.

McDonald's has spent the past year leaning on affordability and promotions to defend market share in a battle with fast-food rivals, convenience stores and at-home meal consumption.

This included a revamped McValue platform, an under-$3 menu, discounted breakfast offers and a broader push into speciality beverages such as refreshers and crafted sodas.

Those initiatives, however, were offset by muted demand and tough year-ago comparisons.

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How China's 'Mr Normal' became the country's latest AI billionaire

For Zhu Yiming, the timing was perfect as his company CXMT went public last week, **Richard Spencer** writes

VCG/GETTING IMAGES

It took one crazy hour's trading in Shanghai last week for a computer chip entrepreneur named Zhu Yiming to become one of China's richest men. He did so as his company, CXMT, shot from nowhere to become the country's most valuable by market capitalisation.

But what is perhaps most remarkable about Zhu, a 54-year-old who looks so "normal" he is said to pass almost unnoticed when he wanders on to the factory floor in engineer's overalls, is how unremarkable he is.

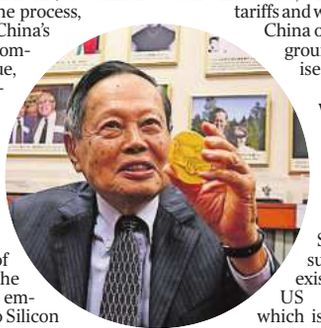
He comes from a normal Chinese family in a normal Chinese town. He had schoolboy hobbies — taking apart alarm clocks and rebuilding them — and though he won a place at China's leading science university, Tsinghua, he did not seek elite college professorships or try to reinvent the wheel, or some modern-day artificial intelligence equivalent. There are many other Chinese businessmen, with a background in science and few years' experience in the United States, just like him.

For those who view the country's economic and technological rise as a threat, that might make him even more dangerous. His rise was not a product of one-off individual genius, but rooted in his use of an educational and investment infrastructure open to many other Chinese.

"CXMT's rapid ascent epitomises China's broader rise as a high-tech powerhouse," said Kyle Chan, an analyst of the Chinese tech industry at the Brookings Institution, a think tank. "Originally aimed at tech self-reliance, China's chip champions will eventually start to compete with industry leaders in global markets."

The valuation of CXMT, or ChangXin Memory Technologies, rose 470 per cent at its IPO on Shanghai's tech market, known as Star, on July 27.

That was an immediate rise from an offer price of 8.66 yuan per share (96p) to 49.50 yuan and took the firm's market capitalisation from $85.5 billion to $487 billion. In the process, CXMT overtook China's previous biggest company by share value, the state-run banking giant ICBC.



Zhu himself, who founded the company in 2016, made a personal profit on paper estimated to be around $10.5 billion. Around half of that is promised to the company's 19,000 employees — similar to Silicon Valley standards for equity distribution, but a fortune in China. They will not be able to cash in for three years, while Zhu is restricted for ten.

As with all tech stocks, some think the valuation of CXMT frothy in terms of earnings. The company has been lossmaking for years and required constant injections of money from China's state-directed banks. Last year its total revenues were only $8.6 billion.

But it almost matched that in this year's first quarter alone as the world went mad for its key product: dynamic random-access memory (Dram) chips. The growth of artificial intelligence has created a worldwide shortage.

On any stock exchange in the world, that would make CXMT an attractive buy. But at the moment, being Chinese gives it an extra advantage.

It can, for now, sell its products in a global market where Dram chips are in demand, and do so at a characteristic Chinese discount price. But as the sole big Chinese player in that market, it can also enjoy a patriotic boost at home, with China increasingly being ring-fenced as President Xi's focus on high-tech industries, President Trump's tariffs and wider US hostility to China on national security grounds create a polarised world.

CXMT is the world's fourth-largest manufacturer of Dram chips. The other three, Micron Technology, which is American, and the South Korean Samsung and SK Hynix, exist firmly within the US tech ecosystem, which is fast trying to exclude Chinese products in the most specialised areas.

It is Zhu's second company. The story of how he came to set up his first, GigaDevice, move it from Silicon Valley back home to China and then use his experience to set up CXMT is an instructional one for anyone looking at the country's rise up the industrial value chain.

Zhu keeps a low profile like many big Chinese entrepreneurs who have to always keep on the right side of the Communist Party's all-powerful but sometimes unpredictable politics.

Zhu Yiming, centre, at GigaDevice's listing in Hong Kong this year; CXMT, right, became China's most valuable company at its IPO last week; below left, the Nobel-winning physicist Chen-Ning Yang

His early background, given by an official biography, merely says he grew up in the town of Yancheng in Jiangsu province, north of Shanghai. His father was a local official and his mother an "ordinary worker".

He was bright enough to get into Tsinghua University, China's elite science institution which is the alma mater of Xi and other national leaders. But his bent was towards the practical, moonlighting from his physics studies to earn money writing computer code in Zhongguancun, the technology hub next door to Beijing's university district.

From Tsinghua he went to the United States, taking a master's degree at Stony Brook, a college of New York State University.

The two institutions have a link through the figure of Chen-Ning Yang, a Tsinghua graduate who won the Nobel prize in physics in 1957 while teaching at Stony Brook before returning to Beijing in old age. But Zhu's own interests remained commercial, heading off afterwards to Silicon Valley and working for a series of companies before deciding he could take on his ideas better on his own account.

Backed by Chinese-American investors, he set up GigaDevice as a chip design company in California, bringing it back to Beijing in 2005.

The difference between chip design and chip manufacture is a big one: the former industry is over-competitive worldwide, while the latter requires big investments, a skilled labour force and scale. For CXMT, China could provide all three.

Its success has been based on a partnership unlike those available to tech firms elsewhere. Much of the cash has come from the city of Hefei in Anhui province, central China, once a byword for poverty but also home to the University of Science and Technology of China, which is run directly by the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Hefei city-linked funders own more than a third of the company and are by far the biggest shareholders. The city's profits from last Monday's sales are said to be roughly equal to its annual GDP.

More money came from a central government tech fund and Alibaba, the giant online retailer that is also a big tech investor.

The Chinese government under Xi had already made developing its own high-tech products its top priority. That may lead to inefficiencies and, ultimately, taxpayers' money wasted, but there is little sign of the downsides yet.

Whether that means CXMT can yet overtake its western rivals remains open to doubt. It is blocked from the highest-level chipmaking tools — such as those produced by the Dutch market leader ASML — by US government diktat.

The US and its allies still dominate that part of the chip market as a result, according to Christopher Miller, an academic at Tufts University in Massachusetts and author of *Chip War*, a book on the global competition in the field.

"CXMT is still in the second tier internationally behind the other three [big Dram companies]," he said.

"Whether it reaches the top tier depends on its ability to produce the highest-end chips. Right now it doesn't have the tools, and these are the most complex tools humankind has ever made."

So CXMT, for all its fresh cash, may in reality be nothing special at all. In terms of his background in both China and Silicon Valley, and his access to state backing and money, Zhu may likewise be indistinguishable from many other Chinese entrepreneurs.

But who cares about that, if you hit your IPO just as worldwide demand for your product is exploding? "His timing was perfect," Miller said.

Business

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	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	130.27		-0.09	8.09
UK Equity A ‡	396.8		+0.72	3.98
UK Growth ‡	10247.14		+44.66	2.25

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS
0800 092 2051

Authorised Inv Funds

Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	374.04		+3.67	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	210.34		+2.06	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	225.68		+0.53	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	67.8		-0.02	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	810.69		-1.18	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	310.72		-0.46	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	91.2		+0.47	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	895.49		+8.51	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	678.25		+5.03	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4286.07		+13.52	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	93.98		+0.65	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.2		+0.17	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.53		+0.07	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116		+0.17	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.4		+0.08	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1331.04		-1.21	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2314.08		+6.13	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1099.35		+4.54	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT
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Health ‡	3263		+8.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2147		+12.00	1.15
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	324.2		+2.90	0.38
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	237		+1.00	1.15

AXA FUND MANAGERS
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808

UK/Global Investment Companies

Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS
08457 46 46 46

European Growth ‡	296.00		...	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1036		+0.97	1.48
UK Growth ‡@	882.00		...	1.71
UK Income ‡@	260.10		...	3.92

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Winchester ‡	5513.68		...	0.62

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Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1605		+21	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	597.6		+1.6	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	398.3		+5.2	...
Strategic Bd ‡	228		+0.2	3.90

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Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡@	495		+1.00	1.77
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡	459.8		+7.10	0.55
Sust Mgd Income ‡	142.2		+0.40	4.72
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡	85.1		...	4.98
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	254.9		+1.50	1.63
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡	324.2		-0.60	1.42

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Amer Spec ‡	2921		...	...
American ‡	7962		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	733.7		...	0.49
European ‡	4374		...	0.78
Global Focus ‡	3651		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.31		...	6.60
Global Special Sits ‡	8928		...	...
Japan ‡	964.9		...	0.34
Moneybldr Bal ‡	48.89		...	0.60
Moneybldr Inc ‡	28.18		...	5.31
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡	202.15		...	2.48
Special Sits ‡	7430		...	1.66

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	105.8		...	1.43

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Share Class C

Corporate Bond ‡	37.33		...	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	213.3		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.6		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	120.4		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)
Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6

HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

Amer Ind Acc ‡	1615		+24	0.78
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1857		+16	2.29
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1076		+10	2.34
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	442.2		+1.1	2.49
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	179.5		+0.5	2.64
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	403.9		+1.9	2.91
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	219.0		+1.1	2.90
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1111		+3	2.66
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	499.8		+1.3	2.80
Japan Ind Acc ‡	229.9		-0.9	1.47
Japan Ind Inc ‡	166.7		-0.7	1.51
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1033		+10	1.60
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	584.4		+5.6	1.63

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

Corp Bd Acc ‡@	311.5		+0.1	4.20
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	401.4		+1.8	3.32
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	224.7		+1.4	2.99
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	87.12		+0.57	3.05

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

American Index Retail Inc ‡	1244		+18	0.77

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Corp Bond ‡	231.46		...	4.02
High Income Dis ‡	432.06		...	3.16
Income & Growth Dis ‡	506.92		...	3.09
Income Inc ‡	1662.2		...	2.89
Money Acc ‡	107.77		...	3.62
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.15		...	5.80
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1394.42		...	1.47
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1341.83		...	1.44

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OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

American A Acc ‡	869.25		+10.01	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	469.12		+0.77	2.63
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	268.21		+0.46	2.50
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	327.88		+1.7	0.21
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	120.61		+0.62	0.96
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	375.66		+0.54	3.79
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.65		+0.1	5.21
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡	143.84		+0.1	5.99
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.63		+0.05	7.69
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡	287.64		+1.86	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1220.19		+9.45	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	301.01		+1.03	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	402.24		+1.74	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2096.8		+18.12	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	480.87		-0.98	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	521.38		-2.65	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	399.99		-2.03	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	716.61		-6.29	1.04
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	934.27		-2.85	1.05

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)

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All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.6		...	4.40
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	97.33		...	5.40
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	357.8		...	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	153.5		...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1329		...	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	297.7		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3235		...	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	33.13		...	6.10
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6515		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	88.53		...	2.40
Global Tech A Acc ‡	6970		...	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡	179.1449		...	2.20
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	186.6		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	335.3		+3	1.70
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	161.4		...	2.70
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	231.2		...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	229.5		...	4.40
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.44		...	4.40
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.42		...	5.80
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.7		...	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	199.8		...	1.30
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	2997		...	...

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Financial Opps ‡	1342.09		+0.5128	1.01
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Merlin Bal Acc ‡	343.41		+0.7609	2.26
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	823.13		+0.3831	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	466.59		+0.1238	3.47
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	601.22		+0.3702	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	294.36		+0.8592	1.75
UK Growth ‡	283.42		-0.0632	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1021.61		+0.3469	4.58

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Euro Ind Acc ‡@	812.2000		+600.0000	200.00
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	485.0000		+360.0000	200.00
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	150.1000		...	460.00
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	62.0400		-1.0000	460.00
Global Health ‡	121.1		+0.4	1.00
Glob Tech Acc ‡	236.5		+6.6	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	153.7000		+30.0000	580.00
Japan Ind Acc ‡	110.6000		-50.0000	130.00
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	405.8000		+230.0000	140.00
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	539.3000		+140.0000	250.00
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	233.5000		+60.0000	250.00
US Ind Acc ‡@	1418		+18	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	468.4000		+260.0000	90.00

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Charifund Inc ‡	1904.12		+0.1689	5.04

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2				
Extra Income Inc ‡	832.83		+0.1961	5.06
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	66.99		-0.0895	4.39
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.68		+0.1514	6.27
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.12		-0.2171	1.57
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.78		+0.2679	3.00
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.32		...	4.26
UK Select A Inc ‡	3276.68		+0.4673	2.67
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3				
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	32.79		+0.0305	5.02
Dividend Inc ‡	66.93		+0.2847	5.34
Recovery A Inc ‡	141.34		+0.5549	2.87
Sml Cos Inc ‡	359.02		+0.3634	2.85
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4				
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡	161.15		+0.2364	3.93

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High Income ‡	86.59		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	295.5		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	719.8		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	323.8		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	479.5		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1097		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1322		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	735.7		...	0.20

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The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)

Class A Shares

Equity

Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1100.83		...	4.34
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1734.24		...	4.30
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1163.84		...	4.42
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14098		...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1625.12		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1732.24		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3791.9		...	0.33
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1525.75		...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1494.84		...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1536.25		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1520.49		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1552.42		...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.37		...	4.76
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	97.9		...	4.80
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1378.76		...	4.71
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3054.34		...	4.61
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2383.39		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1426.35		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2509.61		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1476.86		...	...

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Equity Inc Inc ‡	242.8		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	653.1		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	313.6		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD
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Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1346.8200	1421.4500	...	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS
0845 300 2244

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

Tracker & Special Investment Funds

UK Trkr A Acc ‡	603.1		-3.50	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	274.5		-1.60	2.50

UK & Income Investment Funds

Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	328.8		-0.30	4.00
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	107.8		-0.10	4.00
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	467.7		+0.20	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	297.5		+0.70	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.09		+0.16	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	560.1		-2.00	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	151.6		-0.60	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	229.6		+1.60	4.50
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.50		+0.63	4.50
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	135.6		+0.10	2.50

OEIC B Class

UK Trkr B Acc ‡	668.2		-3.90	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	272.9		-1.60	2.60

OEIC C Class

UK Eq Tkr C ‡	132.5		+0.20	2.60

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003

Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.42		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.09		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.5		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	292.5		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	200.1		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	263.8		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	185.4		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	47.99		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	531.7		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	256.4		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	805		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

Balanced A Acc ‡	185.06		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	156.61		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	132.54		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	104.82		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	493.71		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	431.96		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	487.64		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	317.07		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0684000

Retail Shares Class 1

Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.4413		+4.51	4.64
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	101.5429		+21.53	2.74
Threadneedle StrlngCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.8527		+6.94	4.28
Threadneedle StrlingCorp Acc ‡	54.7547		+6.87	3.96
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.5728		+14.2	4.17
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.9043		+1.71	3.82
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	119.4065		+47.71	3.51
Threadneedle UK Grnty & Inc Rtl Inc ‡	112.6742		+41.68	3.21
Threadneedle UK Instl Rtl ‡	249.9456		+135.1	1.34
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	87.7432		+36.36	3.01
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	166.5221		+98.85	1.33
Threadneedle U Smallr Cons Rtl Inc ‡	398.4276		+127.91	0.39

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis	998.2	998.2	...	1.23

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

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British funds

Index-Linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 1/8 50	64.60	+.42	0.77	2.49
66.33	57.06	Tr IL 0 1/8 52	57.79	+.43	0.43	2.49
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 1/8 28	99.45	+.03	0.13	0.40
100.99	97.18	Tr IL 0 1/8 29	98.36	+.05	0.13	0.76
98.49	94.73	Tr IL 0 1/8 31	95.68	+.09	0.13	1.01
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 1/8 36	83.77	+.21	0.15	1.86
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 1/8 39	77.76	+.30	0.16	2.14
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 1/8 41	73.20	+.35	0.17	2.24
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 1/8 44	67.46	+.40	0.19	2.40
71.23	62.87	Tr IL 0 1/8 46	63.86	+.32	0.20	2.46
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 1/8 48	60.19	+.34	0.21	2.48
60.61	50.05	Tr IL 0 1/8 56	51.02	+.36	0.24	2.41
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 1/8 58	50.03	+.42	0.25	2.38
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 1/8 65	44.79	+.42	0.28	2.25
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 1/8 68	43.73	+.45	0.29	2.19
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 1/8 73	45.13	+.63	0.28	1.91
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 1/8 34	94.02	+.18	0.80	1.58
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 1/8 47	71.86	+.38	1.04	2.45
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 1/8 62	52.86	+.45	0.71	2.33
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 1/8 40	81.55	+.31	0.77	2.20
84.28	76.46	Tr IL 0 1/8 42	77.31	+.34	0.81	2.30
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 1/8 27	101.19	-.01	1.24	0.33
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 1/8 32	99.84	+.16	1.25	1.28
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 1/8 54	75.37	+.53	1.66	2.46
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 1/8 55	74.91	+.49	1.67	2.46
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 1/8 35	94.84	+.25	1.19	1.74
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 1/8 37	91.51	+.29	1.23	1.97
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 1/8 38	96.83	+.31	1.81	2.05
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 1/8 49	89.83	+.47	2.09	2.45
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2¼ 35	241.32	+.50	0.83	1.71
349.35	338.41	Tr IL 4 1/8 30	341.56	+.17	1.21	0.88

Longs (Over 15 Years)

26.99	22.31	Tr 0 1/2 61	23.20	+.13	2.16	5.39
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 1/4 51	56.67	+.42	0.22	2.49
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 3/4 50	34.16	+.22	1.83	5.65
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 1/4 53	42.47	+.27	3.53	5.70
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 1/4 51	41.12	+.22	3.04	5.70
33.04	27.53	Tr 1 1/4 73	28.46	+.18	3.95	5.22
48.44	41.88	Tr 1 3/4 57	43.26	+.25	4.05	5.65
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 3/4 54	43.31	+.24	3.75	5.68
41.45	35.65	Tr 1 3/4 71	36.80	+.22	4.42	5.35
57.14	49.76	Tr 2 1/2 65	51.38	+.28	4.87	5.57
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 1/2 68	66.73	+.34	5.25	5.55
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 3/4 52	74.29	+.33	5.05	5.65
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 3/4 53	73.45	+.35	5.11	5.68
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 1/4 55	80.00	+.35	5.31	5.65
83.52	73.44	Tr 4¾ 60	75.59	+.33	5.29	5.63

Mediums (5-15 Years)

83.19	79.47	Tr 0 1/4 31	81.70	+.21	0.31	4.37
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 3/4 30	84.92	+.19	0.44	4.33
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 3/4 35	69.34	+.27	0.90	4.88
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 3/4 33	77.51	+.23	1.13	4.69
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 7/8 46	44.46	+.22	1.97	5.59
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 1/4 47	49.54	+.23	3.03	5.63
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 1/4 41	57.75	+.26	2.16	5.34
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 1/4 39	63.07	+.26	1.78	5.18
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 3/4 37	72.06	+.28	2.43	5.08
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 3/4 49	50.79	+.26	3.45	5.64
85.07	81.01	Tr 1¾ 32	83.02	+.20	1.20	4.53
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 1/2 45	76.59	+.34	4.57	5.54
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 1/4 33	92.38	+.24	3.52	4.62
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 1/4 44	74.78	+.33	4.35	5.52
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 3/4 38	88.07	+.32	4.26	5.14
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 1/4 34	98.22	+.29	4.58	4.77
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 1/4 35	97.57	+.31	4.61	4.85
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 1/4 42	90.05	+.36	5.00	5.43
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 1/4 32	98.65	+.22	4.31	4.51
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 1/4 34	96.53	+.27	4.40	4.78
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 1/4 36	94.76	+.31	4.49	4.94
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 1/4 39	90.81	+.34	4.68	5.23
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 1/4 40	89.51	+.33	4.75	5.30
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 1/4 46	84.06	+.37	5.06	5.57
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 1/4 49	82.37	+.36	5.16	5.61
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 1/4 31	98.66	+.20	4.18	4.45
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 1/4 33	97.14	+.25	4.25	4.63
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 3/4 30	101.58	+.20	4.68	4.35
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 3/4 35	98.80	+.30	4.81	4.91
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 3/4 38	96.24	+.37	4.94	5.17
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 3/4 30	99.95	+.17	4.38	4.39
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 3/4 40	91.45	+.36	4.78	5.27
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 3/4 37	96.58	+.32	4.79	5.05
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 3/4 36	99.12	+.32	4.92	4.99
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 1/4 41	99.26	+.36	5.29	5.32
105.44	93.20	Tr 5 3/4 56	95.98	+.44	5.60	5.66

Shorts (Under 5 Years)

91.87	89.09	Tr 0 1/2 29	91.30	+.12	0.55	4.22
98.67	91.49	Tr 0 1/4 28	94.65	+.08	0.13	4.01
99.37	96.16	Tr 0 3/4 26	99.32	+.02	0.38	3.59
91.00	87.88

Robert Stephens ***Tempus***
Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

Merger talk injects unwelcome risk

ASTRAZENECA

Market cap	First-half revenue
£178.4bn	$30.7bn

AstraZeneca's share price has slumped by 19 per cent in less than a month for two main reasons. First, it announced early last month that the drug Wainua had failed a crucial heart disease trial and, second, reports emerged last weekend that the company may be considering a merger with its US rival Bristol Myers Squibb.

Given that the company's shares now have a more appealing market valuation following a recent weakening in investor sentiment, do they offer investment potential on a long-term view?

Although AstraZeneca was founded in 1999 via the merger of Swedish business Astra AB and British firm Zeneca Group, the company can trace its history back to 1913. It has expanded both organically and via acquisition so that, even after its recent decline, it is still one of the largest stocks in the FTSE 100.

The US is its key geographical market. It accounts for 42 per cent of sales, although emerging markets are becoming increasingly important and now contribute 27 per cent of revenue. Oncology, meanwhile, is the company's main area of focus. It generates 46 per cent of the firm's sales, with biopharmaceuticals, which include cardiovascular, renal and metabolic diseases, accounting for 36 per cent of revenue.

In terms of its investment potential, investor disappointment on Wainua alone should not dissuade potential purchasers from buying its shares. Although widely viewed as being ultra-defensive due to their relative independence of the world economy's performance, pharmaceutical companies are inherently reliant on a pipeline of new drugs.

AstraZeneca's focus on treatments for non-communicable diseases such as cancer means that it is well placed to capitalise on long-term demographic changes, notably a growing and ageing population.

In fact, the global number of new cancer cases per year is expected to rise from about 21 million to nearly 35 million by 2050.

Over the next two financial years, this exposure is set to contribute to a 12 per cent annualised rise in earnings per share. The company is also on track to meet a target of generating $80 billion in annual revenue in 2030. This equates to a compound annual growth rate of more than 6 per cent based on last year's total sales of about $59 billion and would represent a robust performance despite the blow of its heart disease trial.

Separately, news that the firm may be considering a merger with US peer Bristol Myers Squibb makes the investment case for AstraZeneca somewhat more complicated. Although the two businesses have substantial overlap in terms of their exposure to treatments for non-communicable diseases, and Bristol Myers Squibb's shares currently trade on a relatively modest earnings multiple of 10.7, there is the potential for regulatory hurdles due to the prospective size of the combined entity's oncology portfolio.

Bristol Myers Squibb has a relatively high net debt-to-equity ratio of 184 per cent. And with its earnings growth rate having been somewhat mixed in the recent past and its bottom line forecast to fall modestly next year, the appeal of a merger is not immediately clear.

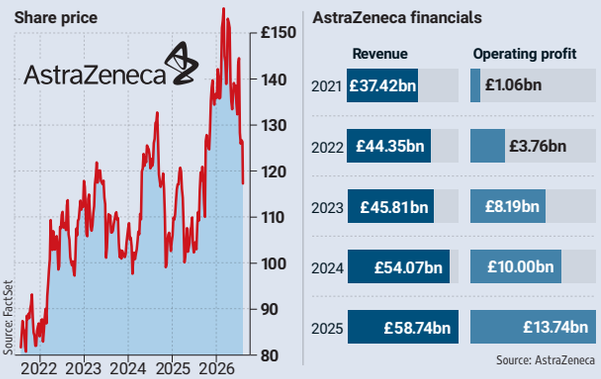
AstraZeneca's recent half-year results confirmed that it has an excellent balance sheet through which to invest in its pipeline of new drugs. For example, its net debt-to-equity ratio stands at 54 per cent, while net interest costs were covered 11 times by operating profits in the first six months of the current financial year.

When combined with its brisk sales growth prospects, as well as the company maintaining the proportion of total revenue spent on core research and development at 23 per cent year on year, the long-term outlook for its pipeline outside any mega-merger is relatively robust.

Trading on a price-to-earnings ratio of 16.8, AstraZeneca would typically offer good value for money based on its excellent long-term growth potential and sound fundamentals. However, the uncertainty of a possible merger means that investors should await further developments.

ADVICE Avoid
WHY Uncertainty regarding the potential for a mega-merger means there are currently better opportunities elsewhere

Aches and pains



AstraZeneca financials

	Revenue	Operating profit
2021	£37.42bn	£1.06bn
2022	£44.35bn	£3.76bn
2023	£45.81bn	£8.19bn
2024	£54.07bn	£10.00bn
2025	£58.74bn	£13.74bn

Source: AstraZeneca

Miners dig FTSE 100 out of three-day losing streak

MARKET REPORT

The FTSE 100 recovered on the back of strong company results and a broad rally across the commodities sector (Robert Miller writes).

By the close, London's leading equity index was 21.68 points, or 0.2 per cent, higher at 10,879.38, its fourth highest close in history and 0.3 per cent off its record close on February 27 of 10,910.55. Leading the charge on the back of copper prices touching two-month highs were the Chilean miner **Antofagasta**, up 252p, or 6.9 per cent, at £39.31 and **Anglo American** 202p, or 5.5 per cent better off at £39.07.

Splitting the commodity stalwarts was **Halma** with a rise of 194p, or 5.5 per cent, to £37.42 after the safety products manufacturer completed the sale of its US orthobiologics business, NovaBone Products, and its subsidiaries to Isto Biologics for $60 million on a cash and debt-free basis.

For the many fans of tech stocks there was welcome news of a rebound in a number of the AI-related stocks, particularly in the US and South Korea, that have fallen sharply in the past ten days on fears about the huge sums of money being invested not being able to generate a good return. On the FTSE 100, the two widely held investment trusts with an exposure to semiconductor manufacturers and chipmakers had a good session. **Polar Capital Technology Trust**, whose portfolio includes Taiwan Semiconductor and Micron Technology, rose 34½p, or 5.4 per cent, to 669p; while **Scottish Mortgage**, which has big investments in Elon Musk's SpaceX and Nvidia, climbed 37½p, or 2.8 per cent, to £13.83.

The FTSE 250, which has enjoyed a better start to the month, rose 234.53 points, or 1 per cent, to 24,459.30. The standout performer on the more UK-focused index was **Travis Perkins**, up 105½p, or 18.4 per cent, to 678½p after decent half-year results; while the biggest faller was **Vistry Group**, still suffering from a warning last month that half- year profits would be "significantly lower" than a year ago.

Investors are particularly not keen on the fact that Vistry's heavy discounting of home sales has impacted on the bottom line and the shares duly fell another 31p, or 9.8 per cent, to 284p.

It didn't help either that the short-sellers had moved in, betting that the shares had further to fall.

Wall Street report

Indices made two new records after another strong session on the back of good company earnings reports. New world AI tech stock Palantir rose by 29.5 per cent after decent results as old world Caterpillar was up by 5.6 per cent due to increased orders and work in building AI data centres. The S&P 500 rose 136.02 points, or 1.8 per cent, to 7,736.52 and the Dow Jones industrial average rose 907.47 points, or 1.7 per cent, to 54,085.88, both new highs. The Nasdaq was up 671.10 points, or 2.6 per cent, at 26,584.99.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Antofagasta	6.9%
Halma	5.5%
Anglo American	5.5%
Polar Capital Technology	5.4%
Fresnillo	5.2%
Pearson	-1.8%
Shell	-2.5%
Coca-Cola Europacific	-4.0%
BP	-4.9%
Smith & Nephew	-6.3%

ANGLO AMERICAN/REUTERS

Anglo American's El Soldado copper mine in Chile. The miner gained ground

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bank's £120bn bond loss

The Bank of England expects to make a loss of £120 billion on its bond buying programme, money which will be covered by the taxpayer under an insurance agreement with the Treasury.

The latest estimate on the amount of money that the central bank will lose when it offloads all government bonds purchased via its asset purchase facility dipped by about £5 billion compared with its previous calculation.

This is likely to have been driven by a fall in interest rate expectations in the second half of June after the US and Iran signed a 60-day ceasefire to pave the way for talks to end the Middle East war.

Bond prices rose during the period, cutting the Bank's expected losses.

Although these losses will be covered by the taxpayer, the Bank argued that they would be cancelled out by payments made to the government before interest rates started to rise in late 2021 and lower overall debt interest payments engineered by the bond buying initiative.

The Bank has offloaded £70 billion of bonds in the last year. At its latest interest rate meeting last month, it calculated that bond disposals raised UK government borrowing costs by between 0.2 and 0.3 percentage points, up from a prior estimate of 0.15 and 0.25 percentage points.

Stock issues cost Irn-Bru

The Irn-Bru maker AG Barr has suffered stock availability issues during the key summer trading months. The company said yesterday the impact was equivalent to about £10 million in lost revenue in the first half of its financial year. AG Barr said the problems were mainly caused by its internal supply chain while there were also some third-party manufacturing constraints that led to limited availability of 500ml cans. In a trading update AG Barr said that revenue for the 26 weeks to August 1 rose by about 8 per cent to £246 million. The shares fell by 35p, or 5.4 per cent, to 610p yesterday.

Domino's winning recipe

Fried chicken and the World Cup proved a winning recipe for Domino's Pizza Group which recorded a rise in sales in the six months to June 28. The FTSE 250 company cited its Chick'N'Dip brand, which launched in February, as helping to "expand [its] relevance across more meal occasions". Marketing focused on event-led campaigns such as the World Cup and Tyson Fury's boxing match at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium in April. Domino's reported a 4.9 per cent rise in like-for-like sales, lifting revenues to £353.6 million. Pre-tax profit was flat at £40.6 million. The shares rose by 15¾p, or 7.7 per cent, to 220p.

Cost-cutting for Pfizer

Pfizer reported better-than-expected second-quarter results, boosted by demand for the blood thinner Eliquis and recently acquired drugs, and announced plans for $2.5 billion more in savings from cost-cutting. The New York-based drugmaker now expects $9.7 billion in net savings from its costs reductions by 2029 as it seeks to offset declining Covid-related revenue and restore growth. Pfizer is counting on newer medicines to lessen its dependence on ageing blockbuster drugs, while investors are watching for signs that its $10 billion acquisition of Metsera can help to establish a foothold in the obesity market.

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.

12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
Automobiles & Part						
86¾	33½	Aston Martin Lag	34½	– ½	...	-0.7
Banking & Finance						
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**	251¾	+ 6¾	5.8	11.7
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.4
3825⅞	2624	**Admiral**	3742	– 60	5.5	15.2
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	592	+ 4½	2.5	23.1
28761½	22372½	AON Corp‡	26383¾	– 185¾	0.9	...
1130	799	Arbuthnot♦	835	+ 5	6.6	7.7
276½	145⅞	Ashmore Group	213⅝	+ 2¾	7.9	17.6
2126½	1479¼	Australia & NZ	1998	+ 55⅞	5.7	19.6
701½	590⅞	**Aviva**	693⅜	– 8¼	5.7	25.8
1088	613	Banco Santander	1078	+ 4	1.5	13.8
554½	352⅞	**Bardays**	522½	+ 7¼	2.2	11.9
17½	4	Blue Star Capital♦	4½		...	-2.3
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	676		5.4	5.1
363¾	212	Bridgepoint Grp	344	+ 4⅜	2.8	68.8
352	263	Chesnara	339½	– 3	6.6	-67.2
491	346	City of London Grp	491	+ 8	6.7	16.5
563½	318½	Close Bros	438½	+ 5¼	...	-6.6
753	203	CMC Markets‡	681	+ 4	2.0	24.8
2957⅜	2057	Deutsche Bank	2805⅛	+ 44¼	3.1	10.4
93	74½	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74⅜		0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2145	Georgia Capital	4500	+ 400	...	2.8
57	43¼	Hansard Global	51	+ 1	8.7	39.2
230	194	Helios U/W♦	223		4.5	7.7
1904	1246	**Hiscox**	1777		2.1	13.2
1610	920¼	**HSBC**	1584¾	– 12¾	3.5	17.6
1956	1016	**IG Group**	1360	– 11	3.1	9.4
204	90½	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	112½	+ ⅝	8.9	7.1
2340	1424½	**ICG**	2012	+ 63	4.3	12.1
257½	195	Intl Personal Fin♯	250		...	10.1
144¾	115⅛	Intl Pubic P'ship	144⅜	+ ⅜	6.1	-13.7
690	499⅞	**Investec**	672	+ 13½	5.7	8.7
76	60	Investment Co	75		...	...
72	48	IP Group	67¼	+ 2	1.9	9.3
27	6½	Jarvis Securities♦	8		43.8	2.5
214½	113⅓	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	161¼	+ 1¾	3.7	8.4
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs	592½	– 7½	2.8	6.6
310	217½	**Legal & General**	302¾	– 1	7.2	30.3
12050	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	12000	+ 70	3.1	8.4
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt‡	301½	+ 12	6.3	19.6
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	36½	+ ⅛	8.5	16.5
117⅞	77⅛	**Lloyds Banking**	117	+ ½	3.4	16.7
22	14	LMS Capital	15½		25.7	...
10165	6684	**London Stock Exchange**	8500	+ 10	1.9	35.7
365	247	**M&G**	362½	+ 1¼	5.7	28.8
327¼	154½	Man Group	310¼	+ 6¾	4.1	27.1
39½	20	Manx Financial Grp♦	24	– ½	2.1	4.4
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	5	+ ¼	...	-15.7
185⅝	98¼	Metro Bank	171¼	– 8⅜	...	21.9
2621½	1864½	National Australia	2242½	+ 76½	4.0	19.4
726	500¼	**NatWest Group**	716	– 6¾	4.9	13.4
842½	438½	PayPoint	621½	+ ½	6.4	10.5
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1095	– 14	1.8	9.5
1¼	0⅛	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅝		...	-1.9
209	150¼	Quilter	197½	+ 1⅜	3.2	22.2
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1674	+ 10	6.0	15.5
325	245	Rockwood Strategic	321½	+ 4½	...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	1940	– 5	5.9	9.9
3	0⅛	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
59½	42⅛	Schroder REIT	43¼	– ¼	8.3	...
599½	358⅛	**Schroders**	589	+ ½	3.7	17.3
1575½	1038⅛	**St James's Place**	1104	+ 17½	1.6	11.1
2278	1285	**Standard Chart'd**	2248	+ 47	2.3	15.5
932	615	**Standard Life**	921½	– 3½	6.0	-195.6
6347½	4186	Sun Life Canada	6123	– 38	3.3	...
6½	2¼	Tavistock Invs♦	3⅛		3.2	2.6
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp	4972		5.2	6.9
1⅜	0¼	Tern♦	1⅜		...	-1.6
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	52	+ ½	...	8.2
0⅝	0⅛	Tooru♦	0⅛		...	-1.6
4	1½	Trueticle♦	3		...	-5.4
132	77⅛	Vanquis Banking Gp	81	+ 1¼	...	25.3
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2100	+ 20	...	11.1
7239½	5453⅛	Wells Fargo	6617⅜	+ 76¾	2.2	...
2275½	1609¼	Westpac Bkg Corp	2032	+ 43⅞	4.0	19.3
31½	23	Worsley Investors	28½		...	...
57550	49947½	Zurich Insurance	55994½	– 526½	4.9	19.0
Construction & Property						
380	181	Alumasc♦	222½		5.0	8.6
6½	4½	Aseana Properties	4⅞		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1½		...	-150.0
900	541	Balfour Beatty	870	+ 4½	1.6	16.5
410½	235⅛	**Barratt Redrow**	314⅜	+ 10¼	5.4	23.1
2890	1715	Bellway	2088	+ 44	3.4	15.7
4442	2796	Berkeley	3630	+ 54	...	10.9
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	910	+ 9½	5.2	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	410	– 2½	2.7	39.4
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	154	+ 3½	5.1	8.8
383½	271⅛	Breedon	347⅜	+ 5½	4.4	14.4
450⅜	318⅛	**British Land**	448¼	+ 3⅜	5.2	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2154	1469⅜	Derwent London	2146	+ 26	3.8	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors♦	4⅜		...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property♦	12½		2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King♦	37½		6.0	25.3
62	31½	Foxtons Group	38¾	+ ⅜	3.0	9.0
632	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	605	+ 10	3.3	18.0
401⅜	241	Genuit Group	293⅞	+ 6⅜	4.4	16.1
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	279	+ 10	3.9	10.3
1019	788½	Grafton Grp Units	1015½	+ 15⅜	3.7	14.5
213	149½	Grainger	174¾	+ 1¾	4.8	6.4
377	270	Great Portland Est	358¾	+ 5¼	2.3	0.0
391½	263½	Hammerson	380⅝	– 5¼	4.8	...
191	116½	Harworth Group	135	+ 3¼	1.3	46.6
400	225	Heath (Samuel)♦	255		5.1	31.9
241½	180⅛	Helical‡	202	+ 2	1.3	41.8
159⅜	87⅛	Ibstock	97¾	+ 1½	3.1	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	124	+ 1	7.2	12.8
3518	1238	Keller	3050		2.6	15.1
7119⅜	6984⅛	Kingspan Group	7093½		0.7	22.4
724½	522½	**Land Securities**	720½	+ 7½	5.7	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	198½	+ 2¼	6.3	...
25½	4¾	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6¼		...	-0.3
209½	124	Marshalls	176	+ 7½	3.8	30.9
112	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	79		5.8	19.7
1¼	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4400	+ 20	3.7	11.8
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8700	+ 100	6.0	16.7
84	65¼	NewRiver REIT‡	82½	+ ¼	8.1	...
234	160	Palace Capital	175½	– 4½	8.5	39.0
320	261	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1143½	+ 12½	5.2	12.8
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109¼	87⅛	Primary Health Props‡	95½	– ¼	7.6	...
33¾	28	Real Estate Inv♦	30¼		4.9	-61.4
849½	578¼	Safestore‡	628½	+ 5½	4.9	...
1126	791½	Savills	944	+ 11	3.6	18.2
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro**	974½	+ 13¼	3.2	...
162⅞	124⅜	Shaftesbury Capital	146¾	+ 1¾	2.9	7.8
15¼	6¼	SIG	8½	– ⅜	...	-1.5
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	127½	+ 1⅜	...	17.6
113	86¼	Sirius Real Estate	101¼	+ 1½	5.4	7.8
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23¼	15¼	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.6
116⅞	74½	Taylor Wimpey	81¾	+ 1¼	5.1	29.0
140	104	Town Centre	130	– 3	3.8	...
723½	493¾	Travis Perkins	678½	+ 105½	1.7	-8.1
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**	171¾	+ 3⅞	4.8	...
760½	442¼	Unite Group	537½	– 1	7.0	...
746½	220	Vistry Group	284	– 31	...	6.7
434¾	312	Workspace Group	361	+ 2	7.2	...
920	730	Wynnstay Props♦	865		3.3	12.0
Consumer Goods						
229	88⅛	AEP Plantations	177	+ 1	3.4	10.3
30	17⅜	Alrea♦	27½		3.6	10.8
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2096	– 27	3.0	14.8
715⅞	589	Barr (AG)	610	– 35	3.1	14.4
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob**	4392	– 74	5.6	12.5
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1210½	+ 3	...	...
181¼	85⅛	C&C Group	99¾	– 1½	4.9	...
5⅞	2¾	Capital Metals♦	4¼		...	-35.3
460	271	Churchill China♦	385	+ 5	5.5	9.7
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4826	– 58	2.1	21.8
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1480		0.4	10.5
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5270	+ 10	2.1	17.8
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1635½	– 20	3.8	20.8
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.5
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1662	+ 54	3.6	10.3
155½	114½	Fevara	131	+ 5½	1.8	5.7
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**	19030	– 200	3.0	30.5
2185⅞	1028⅜	Glanbia	2074	+ 94½	1.8	38.1
307½	191¼	Greencore	262	– 1¼	1.0	19.8
84	4⅜	Headlam	9¼	+ 1⅞	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	606	– 10	5.8	6.9
3632	2626	**Imperial Brands**	2736	– 28	6.1	10.9
7646½	5567⅜	Kerry Group	7147½	+ 121¼	1.7	20.8
170	106⅛	McBride	160¾	– 2⅞	1.9	8.2
165	85	Mulberry Group♦	157½		...	-12.1
1300	880	Nichols♦	1045	– 10	3.7	17.8
374	252	Norcros	325		3.5	...
379	309	Origin Ents♦	366		4.1	8.6
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0⅜		...	-0.0
138	47⅜	Portmeirion♦	50		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1¼		...	-55.0
114	65⅜	PZ Cussons	106¼	– 3¼	3.4	-77.0
138	87	REA	109½	+ 1½	...	-210.3
213⅜	155	Tandem♦	200	+ 10	1.5	12.9
330	220	The Character Grp♦	315	+ 8	2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6¼		...	-14.5
5542½	3644	**Unilever**	4748½	– 21½	3.4	12.8
111	19½	Victoria♦	63	– 2¾	...	-0.2
Engineering						
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2230	1458	Avon Technologies	1780	+ 60	1.0	68.6
1527	902⅛	**Babcock**	1180½	+ 34	0.6	28.0
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2184	+ 41	1.7	31.7
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1250		1.3	6.6
2285	1376	Braime Group♦	2250		0.7	11.9
550	350	Caffyns‡	400		2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ltd♦	0⅛		...	-3.6
340	202¼	Castings‡	293	– 7	6.3	16.9
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	19	+ ½	...	-7.3
624½	446½	Chemring Group	613½	+ 9	1.3	34.5
55	28⅜	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34½	+ ½	...	-38.3
1538	881⅜	Cohort♦	1258	+ 30	1.4	24.1
510	171	Dialight	497	+ 12	...	...
15	5¼	Feedback♦	6		...	-0.2
1270	463⅛	Gooch & Housego♦	1220		1.1	89.1
28500	8640	Goodwin	18540	+ 820	1.5	56.7
4902	3194	**Halma**‡	3742	+ 194	0.7	38.0
3145	1953¼	Hill & Smith	2925	+ 15	1.8	28.5
2¾	1	Image Scan♦	2¾	+ ¼	...	-12.6
3076	2138	**IMI**	3022	+ 60	1.2	24.3
7000	3480	Judges Scl.♦	4510	– 40	2.5	54.5
90	34	LPA♦	82½		...	-31.2
685	409⅞	**Melrose**	480¾	+ 17¾	1.6	16.6
251½	167	Morgan Advanced	236	+ 3½	5.2	31.5
405	200	Mpac♦	322½		...	-10.1
1800	1100	MS Int'l♦	1470	+ 30	1.8	21.8
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2820	+ 112	0.8	33.3
2413½	1779¼	Phillips Elec	1966¾	+ 7¾	3.7	-45.9
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	2¼	– ⅛	...	-3.0
5490	2860	Renishaw	5215	+ 145	1.5	45.3
2088⅛	2054¼	SKF Group	2074½		2.9	30.9
2746½	2088	**Smiths**	2688	+ 40	1.7	31.4
215	135	Solid State♦	192		1.4	26.7
245	170	Somero Enter♦	230	– 5	3.3	16.3
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7290	+ 190	2.3	32.9
7½	4	Tanfield♦	4¼	+ ¼	...	-4.1
350	240	Thorpe FW♦	254	+ 1	2.8	11.7
142¾	47	Transense Tech♦	48½		...	5.2
507½	346⅛	Vesuvius	378¾	+ 7¾	6.2	17.9
710	325	Volex	537	+ 21	0.9	20.5
3580	2254	**Weir**	2686	+ 48	1.6	28.1
2060	828	XP Power	1700	– 32	...	-40.5
Health						
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	280½	+ ½	1.0	60.7
12½	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¼	– ½	...	-6.2
8	0⅛	CellBxHealth♦	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	370	Anpario♦	530		2.4	13.2
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca**	11740	+ 240	2.0	23.9
3¼	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1¾		...	2.5
259¼	193	**Convatec**	229¾	+ 4	2.4	35.9
38	20	Potter & Moore♦	22½		2.4	7.4
116⅜	72	Eco Animal Health♦	100		...	30.7
32	21¼	EKF Diagnostics♦	25⅝	+ ⅛	...	54.6
12⅝	0¼	Futura Medical♦	0⅝		...	-0.1
32281¼	1943	Genus	2204	– 6	1.5	75.2
2282	1288⅛	**GSK**	1914½	+ 5	3.7	13.6
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.1
416⅛	274⅛	**Haleon**	357¾	– 4¾	2.0	19.2
1950	1187	Hikma Pharma	1581	+ 8	4.0	11.7
274	150½	Hutchmed China♦	173	– 2	...	4.4
19⅜	1⅜	ImmuPharma♦	4	+ ⅛	...	-10.8
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6¼	IXICO♦	8		...	-4.3
1	0⅛	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-4.0
77⅝	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	61¼	+ ¼	2.5	36.2
CHF131.50	91.56	Novartis	CHF124.60	+ 0.10	2.0	40.9
962	423½	Oxford Biomedica	566	+ 5	...	-21.0
0¾	0¼	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.7
4⅜	1¼	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
6522⅜	3664	**Reckitt Benck**	5272	– 8	4.1	11.3
27	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	24		...	-103.0
29	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	23		...	-9.6
1441½	1050	**Smith & Neph**	1122	– 75	2.6	20.9
256½	140¼	Spire Healthcare	230	– 3	0.7	56.1
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	6¼		...	1.8
0⅝	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0¼		...	-0.3
Industrials						
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	71¼	– ⅝	...	31.1
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4330½	– 40¾	4.5	27.8
4606¾	2164⅜	Bayer	4172⅜	+ 136½	0.2	-13.2
98⅛	71	Coats Group	81¾	+ ¼	3.0	18.6
3349	2426½	**Croda**	3322	+ 80	3.3	74.8
420	230	Cropper (James)♦	410	+ 25	...	13.3
184	136	Elementis	178⅜	+ 1	1.9	-30.8
110	6¼	Hardide♦	107	+ ½	...	...
3775	2095	International Paper	3115	+ 35	4.4	-8.1
2434	1730⅛	Johnson Matthey‡	2100	+ 120	3.7	-36.7
1085	660	Mondi	921	+ 26	1.3	28.7
169⅜	110	Robinson♦	125		4.8	9.2
949½	597	Swire Pacific	928¾	– 1¼	3.9	45.1
13	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8¼		...	-7.6
124	16¼	Synthomer	99	+ 10	...	-1.0
2858¼	2026½	Takeda Pharma	2494½	– 75¾	3.9	-54.6
819	515	Victrex	811	+ 15	7.3	25.3
430	320	Wynnstay♦	367½		4.9	37.2
479¾	273¼	Zotefoams	458	– 9	1.7	9.9
Leisure						
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	307	– 8	...	14.8
260	160	Celtic♦	220	+ 7	...	6.1
249¼	164	Domino's Pizza	220	+ 15¾	5.2	14.6
1022	500⅛	**Entain**	548⅝	+ 1¼	3.6	-5.3
73	19¼	Evoke	44¼		...	-0.4
55	29	Gaming Realms♦	31¾	– ⅜	...	15.5
310	210	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	225		2.9	4.2
$175.70	115.03	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$156.80	– 0.35	1.2	31.9
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	283		...	9.5
297	129⅜	On The Beach	188¾	+ ⅜	2.1	34.3
164⅜	86	Rank Group	100¾	+ ⅜	2.9	10.6
212½	137½	SSP	209¾	+ 3⅜	2.1	-22.5
0⅝	0⅛	Bow Street Group♦	0⅝		...	-0.3
817	530½	Wetherspoon JD	814½	– 2½	1.5	13.6
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2521	– 22	3.8	20.4
Media						
76½	51½	Aeorema Comms♦	61½	– ½	4.3	48.9
29	18	Altitude Group♦	23½	– 2½	...	-94.0
115	70½	Arcontech Group♦	79		5.1	11.2
844⅜	418½	**Autotrader**	535½	+ 4¾	2.2	15.7
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub‡	630	+ 7	2.6	19.0
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1⅝		...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenæ♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
23	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
785½	262½	Future	317	+ 4¾	5.4	5.1
154	60½	GlobalData	82½	+ 1⅜	1.8	18.8
110	44	IG Design Group♦	106		0.9	-0.9
1000	719	**Informa**	907½	+ 11¼	2.5	...
87⅜	65¼	ITV	73¾	+ ¼	6.8	12.4
224	98½	ME Group	124½	+ 6¼	6.8	8.3
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	13.4
27	12	Mission Group♦	18		...	-0.8
220½	139½	Mony Group‡	203¼	+ 4⅞	6.2	13.3
2341⅜	1624½	News Corp A	2095¼	+ 28	0.7	...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2379½	+ 31½	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦‡	304½	+ 9	5.0	-10.2
1337	874½	**Pearson**	1227½	– 22	2.1	23.9
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
75⅜	40½	Reach‡	42¾	– 1	13.2	-1.0
59	40	React♦	42½		...	-29.3
3910	1991	**Relx**	2700	+ 51	2.6	24.0
827	393½	Rightmove	474¼	+ 3¼	2.3	16.9
270	131	SpaceandPeople♦	137½		...	6.4
133	95½	STV Group	107	+ ½	...	-9.9
470	170½	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
4409¼	4280½	21st Cent Fox A	4321		1.0	...
3359½	3308	21st Cent Fox B	3359½		1.2	...
369	230	Wilmington	285		4.1	22.1
409½	218½	WPP	304⅞	+ ⅝	4.9	6.1
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	56½		...	-5.5
Natural Resources						
0⅛	0	ADM Energy♯	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8¼	H-Power♦	10⅞	+ ¼	...	-4.5
89⅛	36½	Afentra♦	60¾	– 1⅜	...	-58.3
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.2
0½	0⅛	Allen Metals♦	0⅛		...	-12.0
2⅞	1	Aminex	1¼		...	-14.1
8924	3342½	Anglo Amer Plat	6125½	+ 592¼	7.4	23.0
4239	2042	**Anglo Amer**	3907	+ 202	0.7	-15.9
435	154½	Anglo Asian Mng♦	395	+ 10	0.8	34.3
4475	1902½	**Antofagasta**	3931	+ 252	1.2	39.2
1¼	0⅛	Arc Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-1.2
2½	1½	Ariana Resources♦	1¾	– ⅛	...	-130.5
0⅝	0⅛	Arkle Resources♦	0⅛		...	-10.2
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½		...	-12.4
1094	440½	Atalaya Mine	917	+ 38	1.0	17.6
4¼	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3		...	-0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	7¼	+ ¼	...	-2.2

PRICES

Major indices

New York		**Paris**	
Dow Jones	54085.88 (+907.47)	Paris CAC	8666.63 (+52.81)
Nasdaq	26584.99 (+671.10)	**Zurich**	
S&P 500	7736.52 (+136.02)	Zurich SMI	14463.23 (+91.46)
Tokyo		Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6486.70 (+60.20)
Nikkei 225	63957.53 (+202.63)	**London**	
Hong Kong		FTSE100	10879.38 (+21.68)
Hang Seng	25852.92 (-156.48)	FTSE250	24459.30 (+234.53)
Amsterdam		FTSE350	5920.74 (+16.66)
Amsterdam AEX	1112.49 (+10.27)	FTSE Eurotop 100	5092.69 (+38.38)
Sydney		FTSE All Share	5855.17 (+16.91)
Australia AO	9311.90 (+133.50)	FTSE Non Financials	6349.44 (nc)
Frankfurt		TechMark Focus	9456.90 (+104.24)
DAX	26202.35 (+201.04)	US$	1.3446 (+0.0009)
Singapore		Euro	1.1668 (-0.0002)
Singapore Straits	5612.25 (-0.03)	SDR	0.9845 (+0.0006)
Brussels		CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
Brussels BEL20	5707.14 (+39.86)	RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
		RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	87.34	87.82	86.92	87.62	270898	1335828
	26-Dec	86.97	86.97	86.97	87.57	698	12
	27-Mar				87.47	0	
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.2525	96.2525	96.25	96.25	2804	402833
	26-Sep	96.135	96.16	96.125	96.15	106624	422691
	26-Dec	95.93	95.985	95.905	95.965	139106	539379
	27-Mar	95.79	95.865	95.755	95.84	113963	388840
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.735	95.825	95.69	95.795	107677	390773
	27-Sep	95.725	95.825	95.68	95.795	74990	253842
	27-Dec	95.755	95.855	95.7	95.82	86464	292235
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.41	97.43	97.405	97.42	129464	661835

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0½	0	Bezant Resources♦	0½		...	9,9
3495	1917½	BHP Group	3225	+ 129	3,2	24,4
14	7¾	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅜	+ ⅜	...	-91,4
122½	10½	Bougainville	11¼	– ½	...	-16,7
609¾	399⅝	**BP**	525	– 27½	4,8	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0,7
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5		...	-9,5
5½	2¾	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11,2
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1455	+ 65	2,9	6,9
3¾	1¾	Caspian Sunrise♯	1⅞		...	3,5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	148	+ 1⅜	8,1	-4,7
2¼	1⅜	Chariot Ltd♦	1½		...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6,3
0½	0¼	Corcel♦	0⅜		...	-2,1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	9½		...	-1,9
300½	104⅝	DRD Gold	160⅝	+ 4⅛	2,5	13,6
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼		...	-3,1
0½	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0,4
5620	2310	**Endeavour**	3636	+ 119	3,6	17,5
28	9¼	EnQuest	22⅞	– 1	3,5	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2⅛	– ⅛	...	16,0
2¾	0⅝	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1¾		...	-9,0
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo♯	28⅛		...	-4,5
4472	1371	**Fresnillo**	2629	+ 131	4,3	18,8
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	21	+ ½	...	-5,6
12½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	3⅝		...	-5,2
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	3¼	+ ⅜	...	-0,1
3¾	1⅝	Getech♦	3		...	-7,0
707¼	275¼	**Glencore**	550⅜	+ 11⅜	2,3	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅛		...	-4,4
4582¾	1894¾	Gold Fields	2563½	+ 49¾	4,5	...
21	5⅞	Goldplat♦	17	– ¼	3,1	28,3
2	0¼	Goldstone Res♦	0⅝		...	-0,9
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	547½	+ 27	...	16,5
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	298	– ½	...	33,1
235	157¼	Gulf Keystone	169¾	– 2⅛	7,5	32,7
858	246½	Hochschild	451⅜	+ 11¼	1,0	15,6
553	288½	Hunting	448½	+ 1	2,2	23,0
0¼	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2,1
219¾	57⅜	ITM Power♦	104⅛	+ 2¼	...	-14,1
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2⅝		...	-3,2
1¼	0⅝	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅝		...	-3,9
2¼	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1		...	-9,7
345	178⅜	Kenmare Res	199¼	+ 1¼	...	-0,7
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	1⅞		...	-1,8
0¼	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1,1
4¾	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2⅞		...	-29,5
19¼	10½	Metals Exploration♦	12¾	+ ⅛	...	16,3
0⅞	0¼	Nativo Resources♦	0¼		...	-0,1
4½	1	Nostrum Oil & Gas	4		...	-0,0
0⅝	0¼	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-17,2
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	10	Orosur Mining♦	14½		...	...
190¾	54¾	Pan African Res	97¼	+ 2¼	2,2	18,3
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	12¾	+ ¾	...	-44,9
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	21	– ½	...	3,1
22½	5¾	Petra Diamonds	6⅝		...	-0,2
1¼	0½	Petrel Resources♦	0⅞		...	-4,0
1½	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1⅛	+ ⅛	...	-4,8
9	2¼	Plexus Holdings♦	3⅛		...	-1,2
920	672	Porvair♯	876	+ 2	0,8	22,3
5½	2½	Prospex Energy♦	2⅜		...	-4,3
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1		...	-5,9
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	67	– 5½	...	-37,5
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0,3
10416¼	5370½	Rio Tinto Ltd	9023½	+ 195	3,8	17,0
9117	4436½	**Rio Tinto**	7313	+ 224	4,7	16,0
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15,4
375	184¼	Serabi Gold♦	248	– 2	2,0	4,7
302¾	146	Serica Energy♦	226⅛	– 6	7,1	-23,4
3758½	2553⅛	**Shell**	3321½	– 84	4,5	14,7
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	2⅜		...	-2,1
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1¾	+ ⅛	...	-1,5
27	5½	Star Energy♦	25¾	– ¾	...	-4,6
4½	0⅝	Sunda Energy♦	1½	– ⅛	...	-1,4
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-2,3
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0,4
0¼	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0½		...	-7,0
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0,6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6363¼	– 185¼	4,7	12,4
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0,4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	15⅜	+ ½	...	51,5
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0,2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4		...	-2,7
0⅝	0⅛	Vast Resources♯	0⅛		...	-0,5
9	0⅞	Westmount Energy♦	3¼		...	-8,4
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1⅝		...	-6,1
4⅜	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3⅜	– ⅛	...	-7,8

Professional & Support Services

4570	2980	4imprint	4390	+ 112	4,1	14,6
585	464	Andrews Sykes♦	565		4,6	13,1
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	108		4,3	20,4
2832	1981	**Bunzl**	2794	– 2	2,7	19,8
416	215	Capita	252	– 14	...	-1,7
49¾	23⅛	CEPS♦	39	– 1½	...	-11,1
165	90	Christie Group♦	152½	– 1	2,3	30,0
2581¼	2000	**Compass**	2418½	+ 28½	2,1	29,5
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70		3,4	12,2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6370	+ 5	3,4	...
34	15	Diales Grp♦	32		4,7	24,6
7720	4970	**Diploma**	7575	+ 95	0,8	54,9
803	505	DiscoverIE	799	+ 25	1,6	26,5
114½	78⅜	Essentra	108	+ 1⅜	1,9	...
3987	2203	**Experian**	2860	+ 49	1,8	23,4
330	110	FIH Group♦	125	+ 17½	5,4	-3,0
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	806		5,0	8,6
5850	3519⅜	**Intertek**	5840		2,8	26,8
250¼	163½	Int'l Workplace	186¾	– 12¾	0,5	...
172½	123⅜	Johnson Service	151⅝	– ¼	3,2	16,3
554	360	Journeo♦	485	+ 8½	...	20,0
254	178⅜	Kier Group	246⅝	+ 3⅝	3,2	19,3
1170	910	Latham (J)♦‡	1010	– 25	3,6	10,9
3755	2100	London Security♦	3600		2,7	18,6
298	204	LSL Property Servs	245	+ 1	4,7	14,8
100½	59⅛	Macfarlane	71¾	– 1¾	5,1	18,0
200	71¼	Maintel Holdings♦	72½		...	-6,1
28	15¼	Malvern Int'l♦	21½	+ ½	...	-2,6
448½	310	Mears Group	433	– 2½	4,0	7,8
282¼	101⅜	Michael Page	187¼	+ 1½	4,6	64,6
214	134⅜	Mitie Group‡	206¾		2,2	31,3
15¾	0⅛	MobilityOne♦	6¾		...	-2,1
137	71⅜	Newmark Security♦	110		...	15,6
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	195		...	6,1
158	84⅜	Northern Bear♦	123½		6,1	4,1
187½	110	NWF Group♦	140		6,2	7,5
60	42	PCI-PAL♦	59	+ 2½	...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	10¼		...	-15,3
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2,6
0¾	0⅛	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3,1
64	41⅜	Record	43¾	+ ⅛	8,2	11,2
978	772	Renew Holdings♦	908	+ 1	2,2	14,7
507	329⅝	**Rentokil**	370½	+ 13½	2,6	26,7
310	222	Restore♦	305	– 1	2,4	-64,9
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½		...	-0,3
30	13½	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9,0
742¾	536½	RS Group	728	+ 12	3,1	21,0
150	85	RTC Group♦	87½	– 2½	7,7	6,2
116¾	68	RWS Holdings♦	116¾	+ 6¼	5,4	-4,3
612	520	Science Group♦	584	– 1	1,7	7,8
325¾	205	Serco	246	+ 5¾	1,8	17,1
79¾	54	Smiths News	73	+ ¾	7,6	6,2
30	13½	Software Circle♦	15¾	– ¼	...	-75,0
52½	36⅛	Staffline Group♦	44		...	11,3
270½	132¾	SThree	265½	+ 8½	5,4	19,4
350	146	Synectics♦	185		2,7	8,4
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	0⅝		...	-0,6
74	46	Tribal♦	65	+ 2	2,0	15,5
84¼	58	Vianet♦	66		3,6	46,2
490	294½	ZIGUP	462	– 1	5,8	13,7

Retailing

117⅞	82½	AO World	97⅛	– ¼	...	15,3
269¼	140	B&M European	231	+ 3	4,2	14,2
115¾	58¼	Card Factory	75¾	+ 1	6,6	8,4
1648	1062	CVS Group	1280	+ 29	0,7	17,4
204	113	DFS Furniture	142½	– ½	0,7	13,6
1249	707	Dunelm	886	– 3	7,9	11,5
839½	598	Frasers Group	826	– 1½	...	9,5
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1946	+ 2	3,5	16,2
248	123¼	Halfords	244	+ 1	3,7	16,1
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	821½	+ 16½	2,7	16,7
895	640½	Inchcape	840½	+ ½	4,0	11,6
1⅜	0⅛	Imaging Biometrics	0⅝		...	-4,0
106½	64	**JD Sports**	91¾	+ ⅜	1,3	10,6
372½	240½	**Kingfisher**	321	+ 6¾	3,9	22,9
412¼	301⅜	**Marks & Spencer**	410½	– ½	1,0	32,3
4	0⅝	Mothercare♦	0¾		...	0,7
93¼	61⅜	Naked Wines♦	74⅜	+ ⅝	...	-8,1
15310	11200	**Next**	14810	– 90	1,8	19,5
397⅞	140½	Ocado	204⅝	– 12	...	4,3
241⅜	167½	Pets at Home	212	– 2¼	3,5	15,4
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	431½	+ 4½	...	89,9
695	172½	Saga	692	+ 13	...	...
380½	291⅛	**Sainsbury's**	355½	– 1½	3,9	20,5
1120	378⅜	WH Smith	445	+ ⅝	...	-4,0
14	4½	Sosandar♦	13½		...	96,4
510⅜	406⅜	**Tesco**	479	– 7¼	3,0	17,4
50	30½	Topps Tiles	34¼	– ½	9,1	11,2

Technology

252	140½	Alfa Financial	164⅜	+ ⅜	5,8	16,1
307	195	Aptitude Software	196	– 2½	2,8	26,8
129	55	Bango♦	64	– 2½	...	-8,7
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12½	+ ⅛	...	-4,1
33	19⅜	Berkeley Res	24	– 1	...	-62,8
3¼	1½	Blackbird♦	1½		...	-2,5
194	74	Cellebrus Tech♦‡	109		3,1	-121,1
28	12½	Cirata♦	16	+ 1	...	-3,6
0⅜	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0,5
4962	2222	**Computacenter**	4778	+ 172	1,6	32,6
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	260	– 4	0,4	44,4
13½	7½	Corero♦	8¼		...	-110,9
2644	988	Craneware♦	1260	+ 52	2,7	30,1
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½		...	20,8
9¾	5⅛	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9¾		...	-8,3
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	10¾	+ ¼	...	-7,4
0⅝	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0,0
165⅜	94½	FDM Group	113¾	– 1¼	6,2	21,9
480	114	Filtronic♦	233	– 18	...	...
265	180½	GB Group	227	+ 5½	1,9	-7,4
51	24	Iliko♦	26	+ ½	...	-6,5
138	56	Ingenta♦	63½	+ 1½	7,1	5,3
178	73	Intercede♦	112½		...	19,7
28½	11½	Iomart♦	12⅜		...	-1,5
72½	4½	IQE♦	44¾	+ 4¼	...	-11,9
4453½	912½	LG Electronics	1465¼	– 1	1,7	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	66		3,1	15,1
14½	2	Nanoco Group	2½	– ⅛	...	-2,2
138	94½	Netcall♦	118		0,8	48,2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½		2,4	-1,7
60½	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	38¾	+ ⅝	8,5	-69,8
31	17	Pennant Int'l♦	29½		...	-5,9
447	210	Playtech	377	+ 1¾	...	0,9
50	33½	Pulsar Group♦	35½		...	-4,5
551½	398½	QinetiQ‡	542½	+ 20½	2,0	27,0
117	88	RM	99¾	– 2⅛	...	38,2
6½	2½	Seeing Machines♦	4½		...	-11,0
69½	35½	Shearwater Group♦	61½	– 2	...	-1,5
1998	1083	Softcat	1949	+ 25	1,6	29,3
50	5	Sorted Group♯	9		...	-0,2
1018½	550½	Tele Ericsson	765½	+ 18	3,1	11,5
1211	771½	**The Sage Grp**	1099½	+ 10¼	2,2	26,7
91⅜	52½	Touchstar♦‡	85½		3,8	-6,4
435	280	Tracsis♦	342½		0,8	...
400	230	Triad Group‡	390		2,3	39,3
330	210	Water Intel♦	307½	+ ½	...	14,4
150	96½	Xaar	120	– ½	...	-27,9
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	11½		...	-4,1

Telecoms

436¼	206	**Airtel Africa**	333⅞	+ 5⅜	1,6	24,1
242⅜	173	**BT Group**	202¼	– ⅞	4,1	18,4
169½	106	Currys	162⅜	– 1⅞	1,8	10,5
1186	687	Gamma Comms	970	+ 15	2,3	14,0
247½	115½	Helios Towers	197½	+ 2⅜	0,9	71,9
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-3,7
1936	638	Telecom Plus	861	– 4	5,8	8,5
131⅛	82⅛	**Vodafone**	116¾	– ⅜	3,4	-82,7

Transport

260	203½	Braemar‡	228	+ 2	3,1	31,5
5485	3365	Clarkson	5075	– 80	2,2	23,7
683½	332½	EasyJet	637¾	– 4¾	2,1	9,7
240½	152½	FirstGroup‡	184¼	– 1⅛	3,9	8,6
554	320	Fisher (James)	453	+ 3	...	-52,1
492½	332½	**Intl Cons Air**	438½	+ 5⅛	1,6	7,2
685	458	Irish Cont	675	– 2½	2,1	16,9
38⅛	17	Mobico Group	24⅞	+ 1	...	-1,1
7	1½	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼		...	-0,4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1157	+ 44	...	...

Utilities

220¼	151½	**Centrica**	152⅞	– ⅜	3,7	-101,9
937½	613½	Drax Group	716½	+ 1	4,2	34,6
485	420	Jersey Electricity	445		4,9	12,4
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1188	– 1	4,1	18,1
606	439½	Pennon‡	459¼	+ 3¼	6,4	23,7
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3050	+ 14	4,1	24,7
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2356		2,9	22,3
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1406	+ 9	3,8	16,3

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2886	+ 19	2,9	5,4
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	384	– ½	3,5	12,0
1758	1408¼	Aberforth Smlr	1706	– 4	2,8	26,6
1382	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1382	+ 17	2,1	74,7
396	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	395	+ 6	3,9	31,9
220	116½	Athelney Trust	165		6,1	14,5
273	235¼	AVI Global	264½	+ 4½	1,7	52,2
194	154½	AVI Japan	166	+ 1	1,3	56,5
331	262	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	308	+ 1	0,8	...
120	91¾	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	120	+ 1½	0,6	...
1062	811½	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1056	+ 4	0,9	...
171¼	123	Baillie Gifford SN	170	+ 5	0,4	...
225	180½	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	223	+ 3	2,8	35,8
153⅜	120⅜	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	151½	+ 2¼	1,9	67,4
445	385	BH Macro GBP	418	+ 1½	...	19,7
1684	804	Biotech Growth	1622	+ 34	...	-893,7
287	197	BlckRck Amer Inc	283	+ 2	5,3	...
205	116½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	179	+ 4	3,2	51,1
208	159½	BlckRck Fro Inv	191½	+ 1½	4,0	25,4
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	604	+ 8	1,2	87,7
238	198	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	222	+ 2	3,5	30,7
288½	230¼	BlckRck Smlr‡	273	+ 2½	2,9	31,2
1072⅞	543¼	BlckRck Wld Min	916	+ 33	2,6	38,1
1665	1274	Brown Adv US Sm	1610	+ 35	...	-266,8
1578	1336	Brunner‡	1564	+ 14	1,7	56,1
395	312	Caledonia Inv‡	386	– 2	2,0	50,1
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	595	+ 1	3,7	27,6
155⅜	87	Crystal Amber Fd	87	– 2	-63,0	...
592	439⅜	CT Priv Eq Ord	500	– 6	5,6	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	359½	+ 3½	3,7	29,6
120	92	CT UK HIT B‡	112½		5,3	23,2
126	97	CT UK HIT‡	118	+ 2	5,1	24,3
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent♯	475		...	...
860	737½	Edinburgh IT	853	+ 3	3,8	32,1
294½	186¼	Edin Wwide	244	+ 6½	...	-210,8
957	782	European Opps♯	937		-70,8	...
1332	325¼	**F&C Inv Trust**	338½	+ 3¼	1,2	75,4
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	600	+ 10	3,4	26,7
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	270	+ ½	3,3	29,3
1574	810	FdityEmrgMkt	1436	+ 44	1,4	62,3
442	367½	Fidelity European Trust	435	+ 3½	2,3	38,5
470	372	Fidlty Spec Val	468½	+ 2½	2,2	38,2
915	706¼	Fins Gvth & Inc	810	+ 2	2,5	42,9
84¼	69¼	GCP Infrastructure	83¾	+ ¾	8,4	38,9
370	312	Global Opps Tst	337½	+ 6½	3,1	43,3
87	84½	Golden Prospect‡	86½		-12,9	...
68½	57½	Greencoat Renew	66⅞	– ⅝	-16,6	...
119⅜	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind	115¼	+ 1¼	9,2	-13,3
344	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	328		1,3	74,5
330	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	321	+ 5	1,4	73,0
3470	2630⅜	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3430	+ 65	...	-57,7
212½	173½	Hend High Inc	206	+ 2	5,4	18,3
968	769	Hend Smlr	968	+ 14	3,0	37,1
3290½	2285	Herald Inv Trust	3035	+ 75	...	...
524	318½	HgCapital Trust	390	+ 1	1,3	...
139⅜	107¼	HICL Infra	139¼	+ 1¼	6,1	10,1
1611½	1288¼	ICG Ent Tr	1446	+ 14	2,9	-107,3
494¼	379	Impax Env Mkts	434	+ 5	1,2	87,9
519	367	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	498½	+ 9½	3,9	50,7
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc‡	170½	+ ½	7,2	13,0
423	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	421	+ 7	3,8	84,0
1242	1041	JPM American	1242	+ 22	0,9	...
652	390	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	570	+ 8	5,5	...
313	249½	JPM China‡	274	+ 1	4,9	70,4
982	786	JPM Claverhs‡	976	+ 6	3,7	29,0
310	181¾	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	246	+ 6	0,2	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts‡	165½	+ 3⅝	4,6	71,9
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	633	+ 4	2,5	34,8
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	205	+ 3	2,9	36,0
630½	529¾	JPM GG&I	630½	+ 7½	3,9	76,2
1098⅜	799	JPM India‡	904	+ 4	4,9	...
849	634	JPM Japan	827	+ 19	1,1	81,5
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	445	+ 8	0,7	...
1274	977¾	Law Debenture	1262	+ 8	2,9	33,9
187½	142¾	Lowland Inv	186½	+ 2½	3,6	27,7
139	138⅛	Marwyn Val Inv	139		15,3	...
282½	234¼	Mercantile IT	281½	+ 3½	2,9	30,4
678	536	Merchants Trust‡	676	+ 6	4,4	22,1
804	682	Mid Wynd	794	+ 14	1,1	...
1664	1334	Monks Inv Trust	1620	+ 14	0,1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	176	+ 1½	0,9	90,7
1034	854⅜	Murray Income Trust	1022	+ 8	4,0	26,5
372	283½	Murray Intl‡	369	– 1	3,4	26,5
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	416	+ 10	1,4	74,3
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	396½	– ½	...	-56,5
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**	3950	+ 48	1,4	3,8
555	507	Personal Assets	550	+ 2	1,0	91,2
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	669	+ 34½	...	-796,4
84½	63¼	Renewables Infra	77⅞	+ ⅞	9,7	-14,4
2645	1906½	RIT Cap Ptnr	2615	+ 15	1,7	...
990⅜	490	Riverstone	603	+ 10	...	-373,7
738	488¾	Schroder TotRt	704	+ 9	1,6	71,8
892	590	Schrd Asia Pac	828	+ 19	1,6	62,7
376	310	Schrod Inc Gwth	373	+ 1	3,9	29,7
401	262¾	Schrod Jap Gwth	386	+ 7	3,1	55,9
776	652	Schrod UKMid‡	760	+ 12	3,0	30,4
17¾	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17		...	-70,8
566¼	480⅛	Scot American	566	+ 4	2,9	36,2
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1383	+ 37½	0,3	...
87¼	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	87½	+ ½	7,9	12,8
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	232	+ 4	3,6	35,7
352	196⅝	Temp Emg Mkt	315	+ 8	1,7	58,4
428	329	Temple Bar	420	– 2	3,7	30,4
198⅜	162¾	The Glbl Smaller	193¾	+ 1¾	1,6	65,6
9	0⅝	Potentially AI	6⅞		-1,7	...
364½	291	TR Property	321½	+ 1½	5,0	20,3
204	187	UIL	193½		19,1	...
302	240⅜	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	290	+ 2	3,3	21,4
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	728	+ 8	...	4,7
398	306½	Ww Health	372	– 1½	0,6	...

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; ‡ Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91179 (-0.00569)
Canada $	1.89305 (+0.00707)
Denmark Kr	8.72475 (+0.00736)
Euro	1.1669 (+0.0006)
Hong Kong $	10.551 (+0.022)
Hungary	421.68 (-2.93)
Indonesia	24245.14 (+138.68)
Israel	4.0525 (-0.0405)
Japan Yen	211.822 (+0.782)
New Zealand $	2.28468 (-0.00194)
Norway Kr	12.8452 (+0.0235)
Poland	5.01325 (-0.00725)
Russia	109.392 (+1.405)
S Africa	22.02891 (-0.12864)
Sweden Kr	12.8204 (-0.0172)
Switzerland Fr	1.08859 (+0.00092)
Turkey Lira	63.9701 (+0.1253)
USA $	1.3455 (+0.0029)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4051.56

Close $4087.307 **High** $4093.918

Low $4042.53

AM $4049.20 **PM** $4084.20

Platinum $1740.8

Silver $59.741

Palladium $1343.337

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7249

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First, it's super lightweight. At just 2.6kg, you can carry it easily from room to room, lift it to clean stairs, or reach high-up areas without strain on your arms or back.

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Then there's the performance. With powerful suction that rivals full-size corded vacuums, Halo Capsule picks up more dirt, dust and pet hair first time — so you're not wasting time going over the same spots again and again.

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And when it comes to emptying, there's no cloud of dust and no need to touch the dirt. Instead, the high-capacity bag system seals everything neatly away, so you can dispose of it quickly, cleanly and hygienically.

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It holds far more than most cordless vacuums — meaning fewer trips to the bin for more uninterrupted cleaning.

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Add in a long-lasting battery with up to 140 minutes of runtime, and you have a cordless vacuum that delivers on its promise to be cleaner, lighter and more powerful than its competitors.

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Unrivalled 1.6L bag capacity

One touch power

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Easy clean-ups

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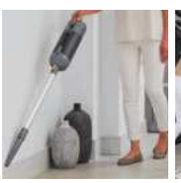
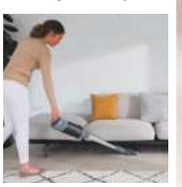

Versatile tools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	HENRY QUICK	HALO CAPSULE	SHARK CORDLESS	DYSON V15
Weight	3.2Kg	2.6Kg	4.1Kg	3.1Kg
Dirt Capacity	1 Litre	1.6 Litres	0.7 Litres	0.77 Litres
Bag Material	Plastic	Paper/Card	Bagless	Bagless
Voltage	25.2V	32V	25.2V	25.2V
Wattage	300W	380W	350W	660W
Run Time	Over 60 mins	Over 60 mins	Under 60 mins	Over 60 mins
Recharge Time	2.5 hrs	2 hrs	3.5hrs	4.5hrs
Main Material	Plastic	Carbon Fibre	Plastic	Plastic

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2 year manufacturer's warranty including battery. When compared to other UK market available large capacity cordless vacuums based on independent tests to IEC62886-2:2016 Sec 5.3. *Run times quoted may vary depending on surfaces cleaned. **Hygienic emptying measured to IEC62885-2:2016 Sec.5.11 Filtration efficiency and dust re-emission of the dry vacuum cleaner - Modified for cordless samples. Halo Capsule vs Leading Bagless competitor in Independent tests. †Combined performance across weight, cleaning performance and dust collection capacity versus leading UK cordless stick vacuum competitors. Free Delivery to UK mainland addresses (including Highlands). Halo Appliances Ltd. Warwickshire, England.

Fiercely protective PR to the stars of showbiz
Neil Reading
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Register

Obituaries

Mary de Rachewiltz

Daughter of Ezra Pound who spent a lifetime trying to separate her father's poetic genius from his antisemitism and treason

Mary de Rachewiltz dedicated much of her long life to being an apologist for her charismatic father Ezra Pound. He not only changed the course of modern poetry but was also a virulent antisemite, spending 12 years incarcerated in postwar America for broadcasting treasonable diatribes against the Allies from fascist Italy. In *Discretions* (1971, republished 2005) she wrote with discretion about her father's indiscretions, the word he had used as a title for a 1923 autobiographical essay.

In her telling, many of Pound's indiscretions were explicable, even justifiable: "He thought he knew more about Italy than American officials, thought he knew of a remedy against war" ... "War was not inevitable; Italy and America should not get involved and above all should not be enemies" ... "Mussolini had no evil intention; he had only the benefit of the people in mind."

Pound, who had left his native America in 1908, was desperate to avoid war, but in 1939 was met by a hostile press in New York and denied an audience by President Roosevelt in Washington. Back in Italy, he addressed Americans over Mussolini's Radio Rome, imploring them that "a responsible citizen must do everything in his power to prevent his country from entering an unjust war". More reprehensible was his antisemitism, which ran through his broadcasts and newspaper articles with lines such as "Democracy is now currently defined in Europe as a 'country run by Jews' " ... "Churchill is a senile front for the Rothschilds" ... "Why confuse Jewdiocracy with democracy?"

In 1943 Pound was indicted for treason in absentia by a US court. In the closing days of the war he was seized by Italian partisans and held in a cage at a US detention centre near Pisa. Mary visited him, recalling: "He had aged a lot and his eyes were inflamed." Shipped back to the US, he was declared insane and incarcerated for 12 years at St Elizabeths Hospital, Washington DC, refusing to admit any guilt.

Visiting London in 1948, Mary called on TS Eliot, "walking along the Thames, past Tennyson Mansions on a misty spring afternoon", hoping for news of her father, whom the poet had recently visited. "I fear your father does not want to accept freedom on any terms that are possible," he told her. Five years later, she too saw her father in Washington, but a justice department official cautioned her: "If you want a piece of good advice, you better not insist that the case be reopened; you might land him in the electric chair."

The charges were dropped in 1958 and Pound returned to Italy, hailing his adopted homeland with a fascist salute. In 1966 his daughter delivered 15 trunks of his papers, including transcripts of his wartime radio broadcasts, to the Beinecke rare book and manuscript library at Yale University, where they remain.

After his death in November 1972, Mary spent the rest of her life working to separate Pound the poet from Pound the fascist and antisemite. She achieved a measure of success in 2004 when she unveiled an English Heritage blue plaque in Kensington Church Walk, where her father had lived from 1909 to 1914. It had previously refused because of his fascist politics. "Pound just quoted what Mussolini said," she insisted. "He made mistakes and we have to take the good part of him, just as he did with others. He fell into certain antisemitic clichés that were rampant in Europe and the US at that time."

BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; AP

De Rachewiltz and Pound in 1958; unveiling his plaque in London, with TS Eliot's widow, in 2004

She was born in 1925 and christened Maria Rudge, the daughter of Pound, whom she called Babbo, and Olga Rudge, his mistress. Pound had achieved fame in London and Paris. He encouraged WB Yeats, helped James Joyce to get *Ulysses* published in 1922, made suggestions to Eliot for editing *The Waste Land* and guided Ernest Hemingway, who in return tried to teach him to box.

The child of his mistress, she was raised in secret by a peasant couple

Olga Rudge was an American violinist who had caught Pound's attention in November 1920 when he reviewed her concert at the Aeolian Hall in London for New Age, praising the "delicate firmness of her fiddling". He had been married to Dorothy Shakespear, an English modernist artist, since 1914 but took a lax approach to fidelity and began a very public liaison with Rudge. He loved them both but according to Mary they "coldly hated each other".

To avoid a scandal she was born at Bressanone (or Brixen), in the Italian South Tyrol, a largely German-speaking area of northern Italy. After nine days "under a glass bell because I was not ripe", she was handed to Johanna and Jakob Marcher, a peasant couple known in her memoir as "Mamme and Tatte", who had produced a succession of stillborn children. She was raised in secret on their farm in Gais and grew up speaking their Tyrolese dialect of German, tending sheep and keeping bees. "The Tyrolean peasant is still ingrained in me," she told The Observer in 2012.

Pound did not completely abandon his wife. In 1926 she bore him a son, Omar, who became a poet and translator (obituary, March 26, 2010). There followed an occasionally amicable but more often hostile ménage à trois, with Pound, Rudge and Shakespear living between Paris and Italy. Later he felt trapped between the two women, wryly observing that both lacked culinary skills. "Some cook, some do not cook/ some things cannot be altered", he wrote in Canto LXXXI, one of the 109 canonical sections of *The Cantos*, his epic, book-length poem.

Unlike the parents of Mamme and Tatte's 16 other orphan children, Mary's biological parents visited and sent money. At eight she began writing her own life story. It ran to one paragraph describing Tatte's bullet-ridden legs, her own blonde hair and blue eyes, and the black lamb she was feeding "because it has a wicked mother who ... likes the white lambs better".

At 12, she was taken by Pound and Rudge to Venice. Despite her peasant upbringing, they expected her to be the young aristocrat, wearing white gloves, eating rich food and speaking Italian instead of her German dialect. "Mamme cried secretly at the tortures I had to endure," she wrote. Pound taught her English and drew up his "Laws for Maria" , but to Rudge, who tried and failed to teach her the violin, she "was obtuse and pigheaded".

She met artists, writers and poets, visited libraries and heard string quartet concerts. Pound taught her tennis and fencing and took her to the cinema, bookshops and on the vaporetto waterbus to the Lido. He sent her to a convent school in Florence, but the nuns' hopes that she would apply for the novitiate were dashed "when they caught me making eyes at the young land surveyor". Reading Florence Nightingale's memoirs, she decided her calling was for battlefield nursing. Between 1941 and 1943, she studied French and Latin with Father Chute, an English abbé.

Her earliest translations were from works by Thomas Hardy. Then one day Pound produced a copy of Prospetti, a quarterly cultural magazine, containing an Italian translation of his second Canto and challenged her to do better. "Invariably he set out to tear it to pieces. Gradually I realised that this was a way for him to reconstruct his own *Cantos* in Italian, a trying-out of his principles on translation with his own poetry," she wrote. Towards the end of the war she returned to her foster parents in the South Tyrol, avoiding conscription because her typing skills were needed in German war hospitals.

With Pound in the US and "with nothing left", she was flattered to receive a telegram from Boris de Rachewiltz, a Russian-Italian student of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Vatican diplomacy whom she had met at a picnic outside Rome in 1944. They were married in 1946 and he taught at the Pontifical Urban University. He died in 1997 and she is survived by their children, Siegfried, an ethnologist, and Patrizia, a poet, writer and translator; they also adopted Graziella, an orphan girl.

The couple bought and renovated the dilapidated 13th-century Castle Brunnenburg, a former Masonic stronghold perched on a sheer rock outcrop against snowy peaks near Merano, close to the Austrian border. "It cost more to put in windows than to buy the castle," she observed wryly. According to a paper in the journal Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics (1999), her husband secured papal consent to revive the Noble Knights of Canossa, a 12th-century familial order, allowing them to be known as prince and princess.

The publication of *Discretions*, written in a poetic style, almost a pastiche of *Cantos*, brought her a two-year fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute, now part of Harvard University, allowing her to continue her Poundian translations. She curated his many possessions, opened the Ezra Pound Centre for Literature at Brunnenburg and published her own Italian-language poetry. In 2012 she was angered by a fascist group calling itself CasaPound in honour of her father's support for Mussolini, especially when a CasaPound sympathiser shot dead two Senegalese street traders before turning the gun on himself. "The fascists want to claim Pound," she declared. "But they have nothing to do with Pound."

After Pound's release from US custody he had joined her at Brunnenburg, but draughty castle life was not to his taste and they quarrelled. He later settled with his mistress, rather than his wife or daughter. "Anyone who met Pound loved him," his daughter said. "When he wrote 'Pride, jealousy and possessiveness/ 3 pains of hell', he was writing about all of us, including his wife. We all wanted him for ourselves."

Mary de Rachewiltz, poet and translator, was born on July 9, 1925. She died on July 24, 2026, aged 101

Register

Lives remembered

Rod Liddle

Tom Stubbs writes: While Rod Liddle (obituary, August 3) was born in Sidcup rather than Scarborough, he had within him as much of the Professional Yorkshireman as the likes of Fred Trueman, Brian Clough and Michael Parkinson; he would on occasion use his Sunday Times column to excoriate the south and southerners, with the strongest vitriol reserved for the capital. Yet there was a brio and a wit to his writing which ensured that his would be the first column one would read, and feel, on the occasions that he had a week off, that one had been served the Yorkshire pudding without the onion gravy. He will be much missed.

Edward Norman

Roy Ludlow writes: When, in 1956, I entered Sir George Monux Grammar School, Walthamstow, as a timid, diminutive 11-year-old from a working class background, Edward Norman (obituary, July 20) was school captain (head boy). I needed to ask him something and, approaching this very tall, thin, austere and academic-looking young man, I addressed him as "Sir". How they must have laughed later that day in the prefects' common room! More importantly, I recall that he dealt with my query in a most kind and gentle manner.

Kevin Keegan

David King writes: As a 17-year-old schoolboy in 1976, I was asked to be one of eight sixth-formers to assist in the BBC *Superstars* episode at Bracknell Leisure Centre that summer. Each of us was assigned a sporting hero to help with their kit and escort them to the required filming sites. At the end of the filming, and after Kevin Keegan's (obituary, July 20) infamous cycle accident, he invited us for a drink at his hotel, thanked us for our support and gave away his Adidas Superstars kit (as did other participants) to the entranced teenagers.

I believe my friend who received the blood-stained blue singlet from the crash still has it, unwashed, over 50 years later.

A true superstar and gentleman.

Bill Oddie

Lewis Rudd, executive producer, The Saturday Banana, writes: Bill Oddie (obituary, July 27) was the main presenter of a live ITV Saturday morning children's programme, *The Saturday Banana*, in 1980. Although the programme included the usual mix of studio games and pop music we also featured debates on subjects reckoned to be of interest to our audience. I particularly remember a feisty exchange on foxhunting which Bill very much relished. Bill's opponent had been recommended by the magazine Horse & Hound. He was unknown to us at the time but later found fame as the TV betting expert John McCririck.

Neil Reading

PR executive who fiercely guarded the reputations of John Cleese, Dawn French and Victoria Wood

As the likes of Alastair Campbell and Max Clifford found out to their cost, the PR man should never become the story, and it was a maxim that Neil Reading followed assiduously.

Reading represented a veritable *Who's Who* of showbiz stars including John Cleese, Dawn French, Lenny Henry and the late Victoria Wood and his contacts book of newspaper editors, senior journalists and social media influencers was second to none.

Few were more skilled at garnering favourable coverage with well-placed stories, and his clients thought the world of him for it. French called him her "ally and fierce protector" and wondered how she would survive without him. Cleese thanked Reading for helping him to "deal with the nastiness of English newspapers" and described him as "protective, sensible and caring".

Yet those on the other side held him in equally high regard, and the tributes from his clients were joined by encomiums from past editors of The Sun, the Daily Mirror and The People among others.

At times Reading's job involved him in crisis-management, and he was adept at keeping the peccadillos and indiscretions of his clients out of the public prints. But pitching positive stories that made headlines was the aspect of the job he enjoyed most, "whether it's a scrap with a tabloid editor or getting clients on the front of GQ", as he once put it.

If the media campaigns Reading ran were high profile, he was the exact opposite, and it was one of his greatest strengths. Everyone in the entertainment and media world knew and respected him — but to almost everyone outside it he remained anonymous.

After starting his own PR agency at the age of 22 with a bunch of clients who were household names, he could have promoted himself as the sharpest young kid on the block, which he almost certainly was. Yet he kept firmly in the background, a skilled fixer who knew his best route to success was not self-promotion but getting the job done with the minimum of fuss.

Search his name on the internet and there is almost nothing; a self-deprecating interview in the media pages of The Independent in 1997, a short profile a few years later in the trade publication PR Week, which called him a "star trooper" — and that was about it.

The Evening Standard included him in a list of the most influential Londoners yet his determination not to become the story never wavered while running one of the most significant agencies in Britain, which in addition to his showbusiness clients served corporate and consumer organisations across the business, property, fashion and hospitality sectors.

It might have been so different, for in his teens Reading was a budding actor whose ambition was to go to drama school. He was all set to do so when he left school at 17 but concluded that "they like you to have seen a bit of life first" and decided to get a job for a year before applying. Offered a post as a marketing assistant doing PR and in-store promotions for the pharmacy chain Underwoods, he came to realise he had found his vocation, and thespian dreams were all but forgotten, although he did appear as Theseus in a 1990 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Queen's Theatre.

DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES

Reading with the producer John Lloyd; below, on holiday; left, Victoria Wood

Neil John Reading was born in 1969 in Beckenham, Kent, and grew up in nearby Chislehurst. His father played little part in his life but he was close to his mother, Gretta, who later served as his office manager and company secretary. In his youth he was an avid autograph hunter and acted in productions at Ravens Wood School, Bromley, where David Bowie and Hanif Kureishi were alumni, while attending evening and weekend classes at the Patricia Hammond School of Dramatic Art. After O-levels he briefly went into the sixth form but dropped out in the first term.

At the time he had a Saturday job at the local branch of Underwoods and his transfer to a full-time post at head office was seamless. Within a year, though, the chain was taken over by Boots and he was made redundant. "That turned out to be a blessing in disguise and I thought I'd like to do entertainment PR," he told The Independent. While editing his school magazine he had made contacts in the publicity departments of Twentieth Century Fox and CBS Records and he turned to them for advice. "They were all really good to me, passing me on to other people," he recalled. One of them was the veteran PR hotshot Mark Borkowski, who told him his diary was full but he could see him in a month. "If you're that busy, there must be something I can do for you," Reading told him. There was not, but the following day he received a phone call from Beer Davies Publicity, saying Borkowski had passed on his details and there was a job going. "I went in that afternoon at two o'clock, and started work at three," Reading remembered.

His start was inauspicious when his first assignment promoting the latest project by the Who's Pete Townshend collapsed. "I put a week-long schedule of interviews together due to start on a Monday, but on the Friday evening his PA rang up and cancelled the whole lot," he recalled. "I had to ring all the people whose TV shows he'd agreed to go on and cancel." He had better luck with a client list that included Viz and Hello! magazines, Channel 4's *The Word* and Rory Bremner and Victoria Wood, who became a good friend and whom he continued to represent until her death in 2016.

However, he came to feel that his style of PR and his employer's "were moving away from each other" and in 1992 without another job to go to he resigned. Within 24 hours he had been headhunted by three other agencies — and turned them all down. "I knew they wanted me because of the clients I had, and the equations didn't work out," he said. "They were offering me a certain amount, yet I would be bringing in double that in business so I decided to set up on my own. I wasn't nervous about it. I just did it."

A friend who had an independent production company offered him office space before his growing client list enabled him to move to a prestigious address in Mayfair. At one time, pride of place on his office wall was given to a framed cartoon of a man with a paparazzo's camera wedged between his buttocks, captioned: "It's the worst case of media intrusion we've ever seen."

He told his clients they could ring him at any time of day or night

His calling card was the personal service he offered his showbiz clients, who were told they could ring him at any time of day or night and he would be there for them. "I'm one of the only people who specialises in doing personal PR," he said in 1997. "In the States, everybody has a publicist as well as their agent and their manager, but over here, that's only come to be the case in recent years ... more and more personalities now want someone looking after them all year round."

In addition to Wood, his early client list included Jonathan Ross, Michael Flatley, Jack Dee, Lee Evans and Ben Elton. Showing his versatility, he also became a PR consultant for Greenpeace. "I never thought we would have a client like that but I've become almost obsessive about it," he said.

He also went on to work as a publicist on a string of hit West End shows, including the *Only Fools and Horses* musical and the stage version of *Fawlty Towers*.

Full of old-school charm, he was equally at home in the company of the celebrities he represented and the journalists who wrote about them, often conducting his business with both at The Ivy, where he ate two or three times a week. However busy the restaurant was, and at the shortest notice, a table was always found for him.

For all his contacts and clubability, he was a family man who was at his happiest in the company of his wife, Claire (née Stuart), whom he married in 2014. She survives him along with their daughter, Rosa.

"He was so much more than a PR guru," said David Yelland, a friend for almost 30 years who got to know him in the 1990s when he was editor of The Sun and who now presents the BBC Radio 4 podcast *When It Hits the Fan* about the PR industry. "He cared so much about his clients and was decent and honest and a gentleman."

Neil Reading, PR man, was born on November 23, 1969. He died after a short illness on July 29, 2026, aged 56

Jimmy Cricket

Comic who appeared on primetime TV with a schtick based on the simpleton from Ballygobackwards

The great Northern Irish comic Frank Carson would tell audiences as they whooped with laughter: "It's the way I tell 'em."

His friend and protégé Jimmy Mulgrew clearly wasn't telling 'em right. Touring working men's clubs in the north of England in the early Seventies, the Ulster-born Mulgrew told "clever" jokes in a dinner jacket and would be spared a bombardment of beer cans and food when the curtain was swiftly brought down.

Northern Ireland was no laughing matter at the time and a "Paddy" trying to be sophisticated in a "monkey suit" was not going to generate mirth from an audience that had completed a week's toil in a mine or foundry. Close to despair, Mulgrew had a lightbulb moment and reversed the psychology. He returned to the clubs with a new persona that wasn't as easy to attack because he was a "downtrodden simpleton" demonstrating his total discombobulation at modern life with a schtick based on taking well-known figures of speech too literally.

Laughter, rather than pies and chips, started flying towards the stage lights when Mulgrew did gags such as: "This old woman came up and said, 'Could you see me across the road?' I said, 'Hang on, I'll run across and have a look.'"

Playing on the stereotype of the simple-minded hick Irishman was of its time, but Mulgrew claimed he was turning the joke back on his audiences. "It would hurt me deeply if I thought I was making the Irish look silly. What I am doing is taking the mickey out of the conception that some English seem to have for the Irish. It's a great compliment that people think I'm a bit simple." Mulgrew would reinforce that trope with gags like: "This bloke came up to me and said, 'Can I tap you for a fiver?' and I said, 'For a fiver you can hit me with a brick.'"

Heckling was now more with him than at him. "I remember once in a club in Liverpool saying, 'You know there's a lot of crime about' and this fella shouted, 'Yes. How much are you getting?'"

SHUTTERSTOCK

Cricket created a dishevelled look despite wearing a dinner jacket

As the character from the mythical land of Ballygobackwards progressed to bigger auditoriums, Mulgrew kept the dinner jacket but wore his trousers at half-mast while his trademark wellies had L and R painted on them but were worn on the wrong feet. He topped off his look with a hat that looked like an upside-down chamber pot and changed his name to Jimmy Cricket after the character Jiminy Cricket in the Disney animation *Pinocchio*.

By the mid-Eighties Cricket

He would punctuate every gag with his catchphrase 'And there's more!'

was a familiar face on British television. And if his humour now dates as a stream of cringy dad jokes, it was the way he told them over decades of honing his craft. "I took a parcel into the post office and the woman behind the counter said, 'It's too heavy and you need another stamp'. I said, 'Another stamp will make it heavier'. She gave me the stamp and said, 'Do you want to stick it on yourself?' I said, 'No I want to stick it on the parcel.'"

Such jokes would be prefaced with a bewildered look at the audience, before his plaintive opening line, "Ladies and gentleman, come 'ere" and the punctuation of each joke with "And there's more!". When even these simple anticipated lines got laughs he knew he had made it.

James Joseph Mulgrew was born into a Catholic family in Cookstown, Co Tyrone, in 1945, the youngest of five children. His father was an undertaker who would turn up at houses and start an impromptu wake with a coffin full of booze. The hearse doubled up as the neighbourhood's taxi service. "He had to sort of rearrange things to fit the passengers in." The colourful Mr Mulgrew died when Jimmy was eight, inspiring later jokes such as: "This man goes to the doctor feeling unwell. The doctor tells him to go over to the window and stick his tongue out. The man says, 'Doctor, will that make me feel better?' The doctor says, 'No, but it will make me feel better, because I don't like the fella that lives across the street.'"

Jimmy's mother got a job in the Lucozade factory in Andersonstown and his four elder siblings worked to keep the Mulgrew household afloat. Laughter got them through hard times. Returning home in the evening his siblings would sit down together and talk about the misadventures of the day. "They were all natural comedians," recalled Cricket, who professed to being hopeless at most things in life apart from telling jokes.

When he left school at 15, one of his teachers said of him: "If ignorance is bliss he's one of the happiest boys around." He found work in a betting shop chalking up the runners and riders on a blackboard, observing the comedy moments as picaresque and often inebriated punters went from hope to despair.

Cricket's first break was winning a PJ Proby lookalike competition. In 1966 he started working as a red coat at the Butlin's holiday camp at Mosney, Co Meath, for £6 a week, a berth in a chalet and three square meals a day. During the winter months he worked as a bingo caller and door-to-door salesman.

At Pontins holiday camp in Morecambe in the summer of 1972, he met Marion "May" Tweedie who was working as a waitress and performing in a singing act with her two sisters. They married in 1974. At his lowest professional ebb his wife's singing earnings supported him. His great friend Carson advised him to keep working for nothing if he couldn't get a gig; his confidence and material would improve with practice. It did.

In 1980 he was ready to unleash Jimmy Cricket on an unsuspecting nation when he made the semi-finals of London Weekend Television's *Search for a Star* talent contest. He toured the pier ends of the country with Cannon and Ball, the Krankies and Carson. Various television appearances followed in *The Good Old Days* and the *Royal Variety Performance*. In 1985 Cricket was given his own show on ITV. "Everyone has a shelf life for television I suppose. Most people have four series and I had two more than that so I was luckier than most."

In the early 1990s he moved over to radio and made four series of the slightly goonish *Jimmy's Cricket Team* on BBC Radio 2 with Bill Pertwee, Peter Goodwright and Noreen Kershaw.

Cricket continued to tour the country to delighted audiences, with his wife (who used his famous wellies to do the gardening) warming up the audience by singing. By the end of his life, he could also look behind him at the memory of many pantos.

Cricket is survived by his wife, whom he joked he could never leave for a chorus girl because she ironed his shirts. He is also survived by their four children. Dale is an events organiser for a hospice in Bury, Greater Manchester. His daughter Jamie became a head teacher and lives in Florida. Katie Mulgrew followed her father on to the comedy circuit. His son Frankie was also a comedian before being ordained as a Catholic priest.

A practising Catholic himself, before walking on stage Cricket would pray to "make the audience happy and forget their troubles for a while". He was proud of the fact that his humour was always "clean" and that children could enjoy his shows in the company of their parents and grandparents. He was made a papal knight in 2015.

Cricket's family reported that he was "cracking jokes" with NHS staff as the end neared. Approaching mortality was no impediment to gags such as, "Tommy from the library died last week. As a mark of respect everybody stood up and made a noise for a minute", or "If you can't spell Armageddon, don't worry. It's not the end of the world."

Jimmy Cricket, comedian, was born on October 17, 1945. He died after a short illness on August 3, 2026, aged 80

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THE TIMES

Court Circular

St James's Palace
4th August, 2026
The Duke of Edinburgh, Colonel-in-Chief, The Royal Dragoon Guards, this morning received Lieutenant Colonel David Brooks upon relinquishing his appointment as Commanding Officer and Lieutenant Colonel Bryn Williams upon assuming the appointment.

His Royal Highness, Patron, the Tennis and Rackets Association, this afternoon received Brigadier Nicholas Orr (Chief Executive Officer).

Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: **newsukadvertising.co.uk** for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email BMDs@thetimes.co.uk

TAKE the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. Matthew 11.29 (CEV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

McCROSTIE on 1st July 2026 to Rebecca (née Mitchell) and Jonathan, a son, Hamish Heathcote Arthur, brother to Caitlin.

Forthcoming Marriages

CAPT C. R. D. ELMHIRST AND MISS J. M. VAN DER GAAG
The engagement is announced between Captain Rupert Elmhirst, Grenadier Guards, second son of Lieutenant Colonel Marcus and the Hon Mrs Elmhirst of Betws Ifan, Ceredigion, and Jemima, daughter of Mr and Mrs Marcus van der Gaag of Hawkenbury, Kent.

Deaths

BERRELL Jennifer Marigold (née Hunter) on 9th July 2026, aged 89, after a long illness. Greatly mourned by her family and friends.

NYE Sheila Elizabeth died peacefully on 12th July 2026, aged 94. Widow of Dennis Nye. Much loved by her children Louise, Simon, Jeremy and Christopher, by their families and by her many friends across Henfield and West Sussex. Funeral service at St Peter's Church, Henfield, on Wednesday 12th August 2026 at 1pm. Flowers or donations for "Smile Train" may be sent to Bungard Funeral Directors, 90 Sackville Road, Hove, BN3 3HE, or online via bungards.co.uk

VERNON-POWELL Colonel Michael, devoted husband to Liz, loving father to Jonathan, Philippa and Caroline and grandfather to Harriet, Bronte, Amber, Max, Angus and Matilda, died peacefully on 20th July 2026, aged 91. Funeral service at the Church of St Augustine of Canterbury, Upton Lovell, Wiltshire, BA12 0JW, on Friday 14th August at 2.30pm.

Memorial Services

BICKMORE Isabel (née Fitzalan Howard) at The Guards' Chapel, Birdcage Walk, SW1 6HQ, on 13th October 2026 at 2pm. Please let us know if you are planning to attend. fbickmore@gmail.com

Thanksgiving Services

STIRLING Sir Angus. A service of thanksgiving will be held at St Magnus-the-Martyr, Lower Thames Street, London, EX3R 6DN, (afterwards at Fishmongers' Hall) on 7th October 2026 at noon. To attend RSVP adasmemorial@icloud.com

In Memoriam – Private

WALTER SIMPSON Morag's beloved "very parfit gentil knight". Remembered every day with love and longing.

Birthdays

TINDLEY David Edward. Happy 90th birthday, lots of love P xx

The simple way to place your Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register. Available 24 hours a day. Go to: **newsukadvertising.co.uk**

Legal Notices

High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts of England and Wales, Insolvency & Companies List (ChD) No: 2026-005951
BLUE MOTOR FINANCE LIMITED
t/a Blue Motor Finance
(Company Number: 02738187)
Registered Office: c/o Ernst & Young LLP, 1 More London Place, London, SE1 2AF
Principal Trading Address: Darenth House, 84 Main Road, Sundridge, Kent, TN14 6ER
Nature of Business: Financial intermediation not elsewhere classified (consumer motor finance / used car finance).
Date of Appointment: 30 July 2026.
Names and Address of Administrators: Simon Edel, Alan Hudson and Richard Barker all of Ernst & Young LLP, 1 More London Place, London, SE1 2AF
Further details contact: The Joint Administrators, Email: BMFadministration@uk.ey.com (for general Administration enquiries); BMFredresscreditors@uk.ey.com (for redress creditors). Alternative contact: Laura Jones.

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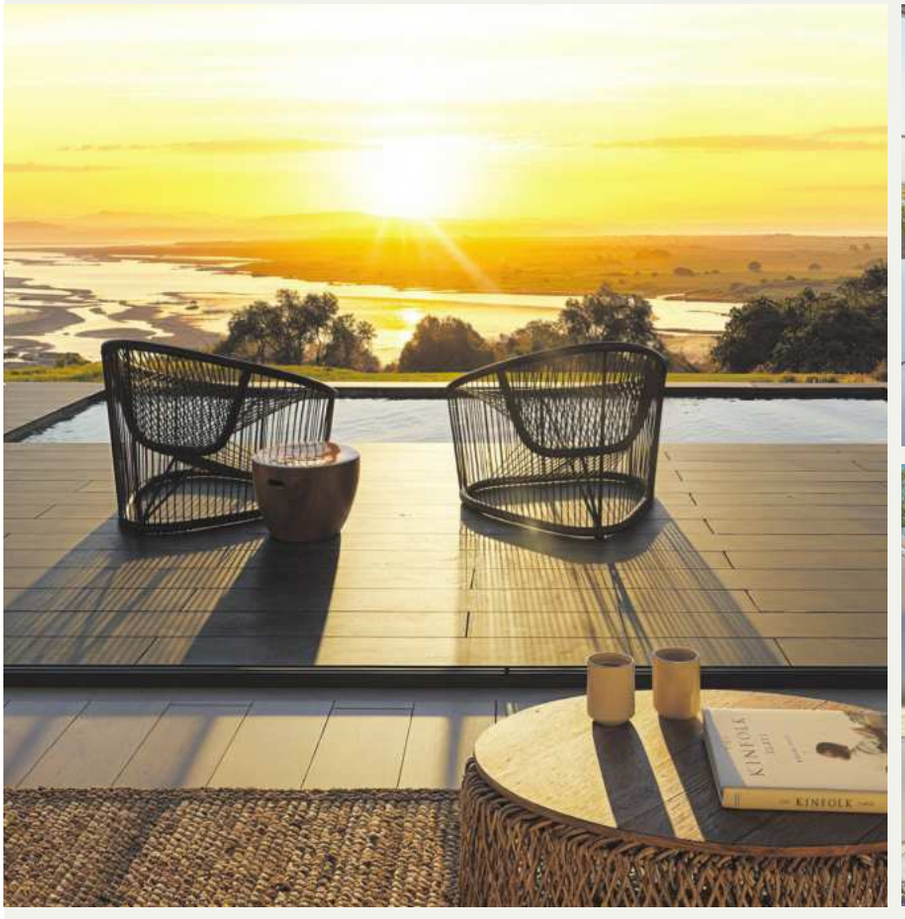

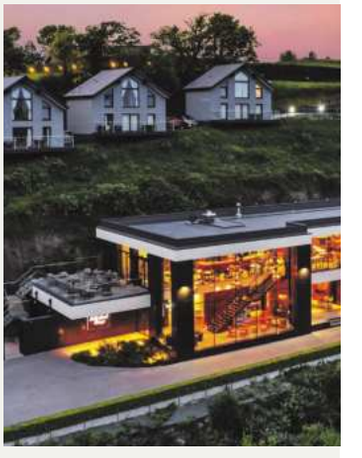

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Day 12 **St. George's, Grenada**

Day 14 **Bridgetown, Barbados**

Day 15 **Bridgetown, Barbados**
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Day 16 **Arrive in London**

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Day 8 **Disembark and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London**

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Today Blustery with rain, showers or thunderstorms. Drier in southern areas. Max 25C (77F), min 6C (43F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder
*previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	14	R	2.6	0.2
Aberporth	20	R	1.4	4.8
Anglesey	20	PC	8.2	2.7
Aviemore	18	R	7.8	0.0
Barnstaple	23	C	0.2	**
Bedford	27	S	0.0	**
Belfast	20	C	6.8	0.6
Birmingham	25	PC	0.0	**
Bournemouth	23	D	0.0	13.9
Bridlington	19	PC	0.0	**
Bristol	24	C	4.4	12.2
Camborne	22	C	0.4	9.6
Cardiff	23	D	1.6	7.8
Edinburgh	19	R	7.8	0.5
Eskdalemuir	16	R	11.4	1.0
Glasgow	17	R	26.8	0.0
Hereford	25	PC	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	25	PC	0.0	9.8
Ipswich	29	C	0.0	13.7
Isle of Man	17	M	8.8	3.4
Isle of Wight	24	C	0.8	**
Jersey	23	C	0.0	13.1
Keswick	18	R	11.6	**
Kinloss	16	**	4.8	0.6
Leeds	22	C	0.0	**
Lerwick	13	R	6.2	6.4
Leuchars	16	D	6.0	0.4
Lincoln	28	PC	0.0	11.6
Liverpool	21	R	1.8	**
London	31	S	0.0	12.5
Lyneham	25	PC	0.0	11.9
Manchester	25	C	0.2	7.4
Margate	27	PC	0.0	12.3
Milford Haven	22	R	1.0	**
Newcastle	21	C	7.0	**
Nottingham	26	PC	0.4	10.4
Orkney	13	R	7.4	**
Oxford	26	C	0.0	**
Plymouth	24	PC	1.8	**
Portland	21	R	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	23	C	0.4	**
Shoreham	28	PC	0.0	8.7
Shrewsbury	21	R	0.0	8.2
Snowdonia	17	R	9.6	**
Southend	29	PC	0.0	12.6
South Uist	**	R	25.0	**
Stornoway	15	C	21.2	6.1
Tiree	15	R	37.0	0.0
Whitehaven	18	R	19.2	5.4
Wick	**	R	7.8	**
Yeovilton	25	**	0.0	13.2

The world

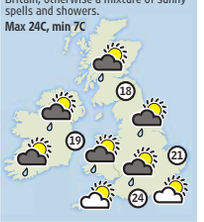
All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	33	S	Madeira	27	PC
Amsterdam	32	S	Madrid	29	S
Athens	33	S	Malaga	35	S
Auckland	**	**	Mallorca	32	PC
Bahrain	39	PC	Malta	34	S
Bangkok	33	PC	Melbourne	12	C
Barbados	31	PC	Mexico City	26	B
Barcelona	30	PC	Miami	27	T
Beijing	**	**	Milan	35	S
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	28	B
Belgrade	36	S	Montreal	23	C
Berlin	25	S	Moscow	25	PC
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	29	M
Bordeaux	30	B	Munich	34	S
Brussels	28	S	Nairobi	19	B
Bucharest	33	S	Naples	32	S
Budapest	37	S	New Orleans	30	PC
Buenos Aires	**	**	New York	26	DU
Cairo	33	S	Nice	30	B
Calcutta	32	**	Nicosia	32	S
Canberra	11	PC	Oslo	20	S
Cape Town	14	M	Paris	30	S
Chicago	28	PC	Perth	19	PC
Copenhagen	20	R	Prague	35	S
Corfu	32	PC	Reykjavik	12	B
Delhi	30	M	Riga	24	PC
Dubai	44	S	Rio de Janeiro	27	PC
Dublin	22	PC	Riyadh	44	S
Faro	24	S	Rome	32	S
Florence	37	S	San Francisco	23	PC
Frankfurt	33	S	Santiago	15	S
Geneva	31	S	São Paulo	25	S
Gibraltar	27	S	Seoul	34	PC
Helsinki	20	PC	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	30	SH	Singapore	26	SH
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	20	PC
Istanbul	28	S	Stockholm	22	S
Jerusalem	32	S	Sydney	17	S
Johannesburg	18	S	Tel Aviv	32	S
Kuala Lumpur	32	PC	Tenerife	35	S
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	28	PC
Lanzarote	33	S	Vancouver	20	PC
Las Palmas	32	S	Venice	**	**
Lima	21	B	Vienna	38	S
Lisbon	27	PC	Warsaw	30	PC
Los Angeles	25	PC	Washington	30	B
Luxor	39	S	Zurich	**	**

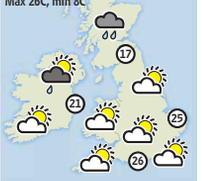
Five days ahead

Rain and showers at times, mainly in the north and west. Feeling hot in the south at times

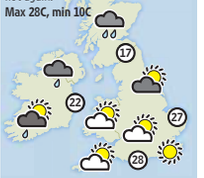
Tomorrow
Early rain clearing northeastern Britain, otherwise a mixture of sunny spells and showers.
Max 24C, min 7C



Friday
Rain across northern and central parts of Scotland. Largely dry elsewhere with plenty of sunny spells, especially in the south.
Max 26C, min 8C

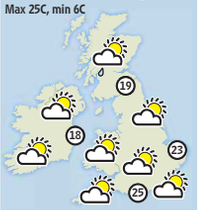


Saturday
A band of rain moves across Britain and Ireland from the west, heavy and persistent in places. Remaining dry and bright in the south, and feeling hot again.
Max 28C, min 10C

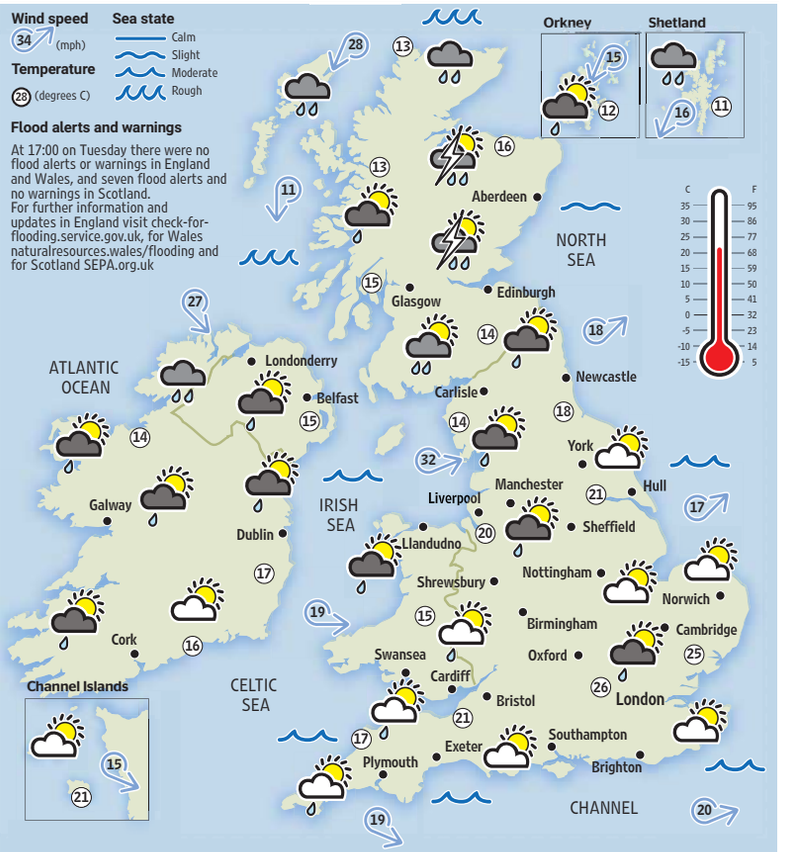


Sunday
A band of drizzle moves eastwards across England and Wales, with sunny spells either side. Blustery with scattered showers in the north and west, heavy in places.
Max 30C, min 6C

Monday
A few showers in northern and central areas, otherwise dry and bright.
Max 25C, min 6C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest

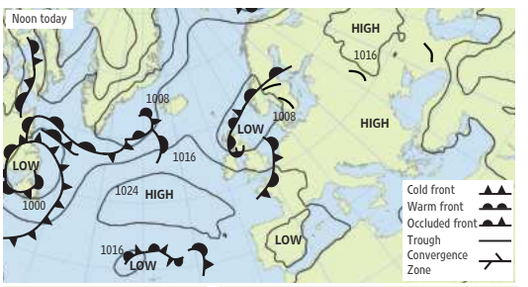


General situation: Windy in places, with rain in the northwest. Thundery showers in Scotland. Sunny spells and a scattering of showers elsewhere.
N Ireland, Republic of Ireland: Windy with rain in the north, heavy at times. Sunny spells and showers in the south. Moderate to fresh northwesterly winds, strong on the coast. Maximum 18C (64F), minimum 7C (45F).
Channel Is, SW Eng, Cen S Eng, E Eng, E Mids, SE Eng, London, E Anglia: Breezy with a few showers, easing later with plenty of sunshine. Showers may linger in the southwest. Moderate to fresh westerly winds. Maximum 25C (77F), minimum 11C (52F).
SW Scotland, Glasgow, NW Scotland, Argyll, N Isles: Windy in places with rain, heavy and persistent at times. Fresh to strong variable winds, lighter further inland. Maximum 16C (61F), minimum 8C (46F).
Wales, W Mids, NW Eng, Cen N Eng, Lake District, NE Eng, IoM: Breezy with sharp showers, most persistent over the hills. Some sunshine in places, mainly in Wales and central England. Fresh southwesterly winds, strong on the west coast. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 10C (50F).
NE Scotland, Edinburgh and Dundee, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, Cen Highland, Borders: Scattered heavy, thundery showers, merging to longer spells of rain at times, though with some sunshine in places. Light to moderate variable winds. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 6C (43F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	06:09	4.0	18:55	3.7
Avonmouth	--:--	--	12:10	11.7
Belfast	03:49	3.4	16:27	3.1
Cardiff	11:50	10.9	--:--	--
Devonport	10:42	4.8	22:55	4.9
Dover	03:37	6.2	16:04	6.4
Dublin	04:28	3.9	17:04	3.6
Falmouth	09:54	4.6	22:18	4.7
Greenock	05:07	3.4	17:35	3.2
Harwich	04:44	3.7	16:42	3.8
Holyhead	03:04	5.3	15:31	4.8
Hull	11:15	7.0	23:47	6.4
Leith	07:28	5.2	20:10	4.9
Liverpool	03:46	8.8	16:11	8.3
London Bridge	06:43	6.4	18:56	6.6
Lowestoft	02:25	2.2	14:26	2.5
Milford Haven	11:09	6.1	23:35	6.2
Morecambe	03:58	8.8	16:23	8.2
Newhaven	03:46	6.1	16:11	6.1
Newquay	10:04	6.0	22:30	6.0
Oban	10:26	3.3	23:03	3.4
Penzance	09:34	4.8	21:59	4.9
Portsmouth	04:09	4.3	16:51	4.3
Shoreham	03:49	5.7	16:16	5.7
Southampton	03:24	4.2	15:56	4.3
Swansea	11:09	8.3	23:35	8.2
Tees	08:30	5.2	21:18	4.8
Weymouth	11:30	1.6	23:47	1.6



Synoptic situation

Low pressure centred over northern Scotland brings outbreaks of rain across the north of Ireland and much of Scotland, most persistent in western areas, courtesy of an occluded front. It will be very windy in places, especially near Irish Sea coasts and western Scotland later. A mixture of sunny spells and scattered showers further south.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday
Warmest: Cavendish, Suffolk, 31.5C
Coldest: Cairngorm, 5.3C
Wettest: Kinlochewe, 39.2mm
Sunniest: Bournemouth, Dorset, 13.9hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.30
Sun sets: 20.41
Moon rises: 22.43
Moon sets: 15.13 Thu
New moon: August 12

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:43-04:46
Belfast	21:47-05:13
Birmingham	21:23-05:05
Cardiff	21:24-05:14
Exeter	21:23-05:18
Glasgow	21:46-05:01
Liverpool	21:30-05:06
London	21:12-05:02
Manchester	21:28-05:03
Newcastle	21:31-04:54
Norwich	21:10-04:52
Penzance	21:29-05:28
Sheffield	21:24-05:00

Weather Eye
Paul Simons

On this day, August 5, in 1931, thunderstorms erupted at night over many parts of England with thunder and lightning, large hailstones, deluges of rain and flash floods.

But of all the places struck by the storms that day, perhaps the most fitting was Puddletown in the Piddle Valley, Dorset, where 1.93in (49mm) of rain fell in only 75 minutes.

Apart from its wonderful and appropriate name, Puddletown is also famous for its connection to Thomas Hardy, whose grandfather and other relatives lived there.

The village featured in some of Hardy's work, most notably as the fictional village of Weatherbury in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, where Bathsheba Everdene had her farm, and it was the setting for a famous scene when a storm breaks out at night. It is introduced as a drum roll with a theatrical light show, "A light flapped over the scene, as if reflected from phosphorescent wings crossing the sky, and a rumble filled the air."

The shepherd Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba work to secure a huge haystack lit up by the lightning bolts darting across the sky and which threaten to strike the characters at any moment. Just before dawn the storm launches another ordeal.

"A huge drop of rain smote his [Gabriel's] face, the wind snarled round every corner, the trees rocked to the bases of their trunks, and the twigs clashed in strife ... The rain came on in earnest, and Oak soon felt the water to be tracking cold and clammy routes down his back. Ultimately he was reduced well-nigh to a homogenous sop, and the dyes of clothes trickled down. The rain stretched obliquely through the dull atmosphere in liquid spines, unbroken in continuity between their beginnings in the clouds and their points in him."

Another downpour appears in the novel, when Sergeant Troy is grieving over the grave of Fanny Robin — his true sweetheart — in the churchyard of Weatherbury Church, as water gushes down from a hideous gargoyle on the roof.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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Uncover the history, culture and elegant architecture of Poland's former royal capital, and pay a moving visit to Auschwitz.

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*Save up to 15% applies to select tour bookings made by September 30, 2026 and cannot be applied retrospectively to bookings already confirmed. Offer applies to select tours only and cannot be combined with any other offer. Exclusions apply. Prices shown include discount. Single supplements apply. Prices correct at time of print. Subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. These holidays are organised and operated by Newmarket Holidays Ltd, a company wholly independent of News UK. ABTOT 5509. ATOL protected 2325. ABTA V7812. Standard phone charges apply.

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Sport

Squirrel-eating survival expert is first GB woman in America's Cup for 90 years

Sailing
Neil Squires

Jemima Lines will become Britain's first female America's Cup sailor for 90 years in Naples next year after being called up to the GB1 squad.

The 38th America's Cup will be the first to require each five-person crew to have at least one woman on board and in turning to the 29-year-old, from Kent, team principal Ben Ainslie has sprung a surprise.

While Lines is a World Championship-standard kitefoiler — a discipline which involves riding a board attached to a hydrofoil up to one metre above the water's surface — who was back-up to gold medallist Ellie Aldridge at the Paris Olympics, she does not have the profile of some of the other available candidates.

What she does have though, apart from her sailing skill set, is a mechanical engineering degree that will enable her to contribute to the design element of the mission as well — and a singular can-do attitude which, when a team is on a 175-year losing streak, will come in handy.

A Bear Grylls survival skills instructor who can butcher a squirrel without batting an eyelid — "it tastes nice with a bit of salt, a bit like chicken" — she cycled all the way round Iceland as an 18-year-old on a solo expedition.

Lines has worked as a guide at Everest basecamp, summited Alaskan peaks and trekked across Mongolian mountain ranges. And she has set altitude kite surfing records, at Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, and Lake Karakul in Tajikistan, a stone's throw from the Afghanistan border.

"I love challenges and the America's Cup is as good as it gets," she said. "Growing up I knew the kind of role I wanted but I could never put my finger on what that would look like. Whenever anyone asked me what I wanted to do, I said, 'I want to be an engineer but an athlete too — I don't know if that job exists,' so this is pretty awesome really.

"We've got a team of 150 behind the scenes and you can really feel this daily drive of everyone heading towards this one goal. That's just such a wonderful thing to be part of."

JACKSON GREEN/GB1

Lines, a kitefoiler from Kent, was not an obvious choice for the America's Cup

Unsurprisingly for someone who also enjoys paragliding, mountaineering and snow kiting — speeding along over snow and ice powered by wind — and who also spent six weeks alone cycling the length of Norway — being the one female member of a five-strong crew does not faze her one bit.

"It's brilliant giving women these opportunities," she said. "In everything I've done, all I've known is being either the only female or one of very few. On my degree course at Bristol [University] there were 300 guys and only five women in the lecture theatres. In the workplace, lots of the jobs I've done I've been the only woman on the shop floor with the guys building power motors. So it's nothing unusual really.

"I love seeing the way the guys work. They are an incredible team and I hope I can contribute as strongly as they do."

She is the youngest of four sisters, indoctrinated into the joy of the outdoors from their earliest steps. "Before I could even crawl we would climb mountains in the Brecon Beacons. My parents always liked to joke that to get into our family we had to do some form of SAS selection," she said.

Her father, Ralph Crathorne, was in the Special Forces. He died in an ice climbing accident on Ben Nevis this year.

"He was an absolute adventurer," she said. "When I cycled round Iceland on my own, I didn't even own a bike. I just kind of had this big dream. I remember I presented the idea to my mum and she was like, 'Absolutely not', and then I went to my dad and he was like, 'Go for it'.

"He would love this because it's all of the different parts of me growing up combined together. That would make him proud just seeing me doing the things that I love doing all bundled up in one. He did a lot of talks to different high-performing teams — he was a kind of leadership expert — so he would be fascinated by this."

In a perfect world, he would have been here to see his daughter emulate Phyllis Sopwith, the previous woman to be part of a British America's Cup challenge, in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1937. Sadly, life is not perfect but after the darkness comes the dawn. As well as her selection for GB1, she also got married this summer.

Lines has carved out her piece of history in reaching this point. Simply being part of the British challenge will not be enough though. "This is just such a dream for me," she said.

"But winning the America's Cup would definitely be the cherry on the top."

● *The Louis Vuitton Cup stage takes place from May 26 to July 4, 2027. The final America's Cup match begins on July 10.*

Tearful Draper's US Open place in doubt after defeat

Tennis
Tom Kershaw Tennis Correspondent

Jack Draper has endured so many false dawns of late it has felt impossible to see the light. An 11th-hour withdrawal from Wimbledon was followed by an aborted comeback at the Washington Open due to the same arm injury that has plagued him for more than a year.

The 24-year-old, inset, was deemed fit to return at the Montreal Masters yesterday, but a 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 defeat against Térence Atmane in the first round left him hunched over in his chair in floods of tears during the deciding set as the toll of another brutal setback began to sink in.

The former British No 1 recomposed himself to finish the match, but there was no escaping the weight of such a wretched run of luck. Draper's serve dipped markedly in speed during the deciding set and he frequently resorted to the drop shot, suggesting the pain in his elbow was still a factor. It has already limited Draper to 14 matches on the ATP Tour this season and this was his first since reaching the semi-finals at Eastbourne in June.

Draper played just four tournaments in the spring before an aggravated tendon in his knee — precipitated by a change to his service motion designed to limit the strain on his arm — ruled him out of the French Open. Having been ranked No 4 in the world in June last year, Draper is now down at No 143 and will have to come through qualifying if he does not receive a wild card into the US Open. Whether he will be fit to play at all is a serious doubt.

Atmane, the world No 46, was a credible opponent but also the kind of player Draper ought to brush aside in full flight. The early signs had been more positive, with Draper noticeably not sporting a compression sleeve on his left arm. His coaching partnership with Andy Murray is set to continue for the time being at least, having initially only been scheduled for the grass-court season. Murray was not in the box in Montreal, having travelled with Draper to Washington last week.

Draper's heavy top-spin forehand fired well early on, he used the drop shot to good effect and showed a willingness to come into the net. But his level dropped abruptly at 4-3 and Atmane pounced on miscues and errant shot selection to snatch the set. Draper rallied at the start of the second and played brilliantly throughout, making just one unforced error as he broke twice and appeared to be in control of the match.

Things quickly unravelled in the decider, though. After Atmane edged an attritional backhand rally to secure the break, Draper appeared more sluggish as the signs of his injury became more prevalent. He spurned the chance to break back at 2-1 and then continued to look in considerable — and increasing — discomfort.

It was after conceding the second break of serve — all but sealing defeat — that Draper broke down, crying throughout the change of ends. He wiped the tears away and completed the match, but the toll of so many setbacks on such a prodigious talent is proving increasingly difficult to bear.

New Zealand tour to South Africa part of Sky TV deal

Rugby union New Zealand's tour to South Africa — marketed as "Rugby's Greatest Rivalry" — will be broadcast on Sky Sports in the UK as part of a fresh five-year deal (Will Kelleher writes). All four Tests between the All Blacks and Springboks, and New Zealand's tour matches against Stormers, Sharks, Bulls and Lions, will be on Sky over the next five weeks.

This is part of a deal between Sky and Sanzaar, the governing body for the major southern hemisphere unions (New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and Argentina), which will run until the end of 2030. Sky has paid an increased multimillion-pound fee to secure the rights. The deal also covers when the Springboks visit New Zealand in 2030, the Rugby Championship in 2027, 2028 and 2029, Bledisloe Cup matches between the Wallabies and All Blacks, and other Tests such as Argentina hosting South Africa this month.

Kempton Park

Rob Wright

5.20 Crowned
5.50 Ahmadi
6.20 Clive The Writer
6.50 Virtue King
7.20 Dialstone
7.50 Church Wedding
8.20 Jumeirah Sands
8.50 Desert Belle

Going: standard to slow
Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best **Racing TV**

5.20 Nursery (2-Y-O: £3,140: 6f) (12)

1 (9) 01005 **PAGEANT GIRL** 21 (B,D) James Owen 9-8 **L Morris**
2 (1) 306 **KOCHELLA** 21 Henry Dwyer (AUS) 9-8 **David Egan**
3 (5) 44 **BEACH AHEAD** 59 (T) G & J Moore 9-8 **Toby Moore (7)**
4 (7) 6531 **TALLAHASSEE LASSIE** 22 J Fanshawe 9-8 **O Murphy**
5 (4) 440 **NASCENT STAR** 18 H Palmer 9-8 **R Havlin**
6 (3) 445 **NAJMET MINZAAL** 28 (BF) J Channon 9-7 **C Rodriguez**
7 (8) 34 **CROWNED** 41 Michael Keady 9-6 **C T Keane**
8 (2) 005 **ITS A GINGER THING** 11 R Hughes 9-6 **F Marsh**
9 (6) 04056 **INVINCIBLE ISAAC** 34 (V) Lemos Souza 9-5 **Rossa Ryan**
10(11) 060 **SECRET RIVAL** 20 E Walker 9-5 **K Shoemark**
11(10) 402 **TIME AND EFFORT** 13 I Furtado 9-4 **S De Sousa**
12(12) 006 **TRUST YOURSELF** 39 (W) J Tate 9-4 **James Doyle**

5-4 Tallahassee Lassie, 6-1 Najmet Minzaal, 10-1 Invincible Isaac, Crowned, Time And Effort, 12-1 Nascent Star, Beach Ahead, 16-1 others.

Rob Wright's choice: Crowned looks well treated on his handicap debut **Dangers** Tallahassee Lassie, Kochella

5.50 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (9)

1 (9) **AHMADI** R Beckett 9-7 **O Murphy**
2 (7) **CHYMBULAK** R Varian 9-7 **R Dawson**
3 (5) **GREENLANDER** S C Williams 9-7 **K Shoemark**
4 (6) 000 **MINZAAL TIME** 22 R Hughes 9-7 **C T Keane**
5 (8) **MINZAZI** R Hannon 9-7 **S M Levey**
6 (1) **NATIVE CHIEF** J Butler 9-7 **David Egan**
7 (3) 6 **OFF THE PEG** 34 R Hughes 9-7 **F Marsh**
8 (2) 0 **THERE GOES MY HERO** 30 Kieran Burke 9-7 **Doubtful**
9 (4) **VARDO** (T) Owen Burrows 9-7 **C Rodriguez**

2-1 Ahmadi, 9-4 Chymbulak, 7-2 Minzazi, 10-1 Off The Peg, 14-1 Vardo, 16-1 Native Chief, Greenlander, 33-1 Minzaal Time.

Wright choice: Ahmadi, whose dam was a listed winner, makes some appeal **Dangers** Off The Peg, Greenlander

6.20 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (9)

1 (3) 0 **CLIVE THE WRITER** 19 W Muir & C Grassick 9-7 **S De Sousa**
2 (5) **DOVER STREET** R Hannon 9-7 **David Egan**
3 (9) **FULCRUM** J & T Gosden 9-7 **R Havlin**
4 (6) **GHOST RAIDER** R Beckett 9-7 **Rossa Ryan**
5 (8) **GOLD ARMY** Harry Charlton 9-7 **L Edmunds**
6 (1) **GREAT PLAINS** A King 9-7 **K Shoemark**
7 (7) **MONTALBANO** A Balding 9-7 **O Murphy**
8 (4) 0 **SAYID HARRY ANGEL** 18 R Hughes 9-7 **C T Keane**
9 (2) 6 **MODA ROSA** 13 B Meehan 9-2 **J Leavy**

2-1 Fulcrum, 5-2 Dover Street, 11-2 Ghost Raider, 7-1 Montalbano, 8-1 Gold Army, 10-1 Great Plains, 14-1 Clive The Writer, 66-1 others.

Wright choice: Clive The Writer needed the experience on his debut at Newbury **Dangers** Ghost Raider, Montalbano

6.50 Novice Stakes (£5,400: 1m) (14)

1 (13) 1 **CHARLIE'S CANNON** 34 (H,C) S Dow 3-9-11 **Rossa Ryan**
2 (2) 41- **GAVRIEL** 343 (CD) J & T Gosden 3-9-11 **R Havlin**
3 (3) 51 **LUNAR TIDE** 118 (D) G Baker 3-9-11 **B Sayette**
4 (8) 1- **BLACK CHIFFON** 307 A Balding 3-9-6 **O Murphy**
5 (9) **THAT'S ALL FOLKS** J288 (W,H) Seamus Mullins 6-9-6 **Josephine Gordon**
6 (10) **CLASSY NIGHT** Harry Eustace 3-9-4 **G Wood**
7 (5) 3 **COLONNADE** 23 (T) S & E Crisford 3-9-4 **J Mitchell**
8 (14) 02- **KAINDY** 271 R Varian 3-9-4 **R Dawson**
9 (6) **NAJDI STORM** Harry Charlton 3-9-4 **C T Keane**
10(11) **TALKING BEAR** R Phillips 3-9-4 **C Hutchinson**
11 (4) **TATAFORTINO** G & J Moore 3-9-4 **L Morris**
12 (1) **VIRTUE KING** A Perrett 3-9-4 **C Rodriguez**
13(12) 44 **KINO PLASMAT** 36 E Walker 3-8-13 **K Shoemark**
14 (7) **LADY BLITZLE** J Channon 3-8-13 **Rose Dawes (5)**

10-3 Gavriel, 7-2 Kaindy, 9-2 Black Chiffon, 6-1 Najdi Storm, 13-2 Colonnade, 10-1 Charlie's Cannon, 12-1 Lunar Tide, 14-1 Kino Plasmat.

Wright choice: Virtue King, by Kingman out of a group one winner, looks interesting **Dangers** Colonnade, Black Chiffon

7.20 Novice Stakes (£6,480: 1m 3f) (12)

1 (8) 01 **PURPLE MOON** 118 G Baker 4-10-6 **B Sayette**
2 (1) **ANCHOR** J134 C Hobson 4-9-13 **G Mangan**
3 (4) **BARACHIEL** J116 R Stephens 5-9-13 **L Morris**
4 (9) 04 **DIGGER ONE** 37 Kieran Burke 5-9-13 **Josephine Gordon**
5 (7) 5 **ARKLAN** 37 E J-Houghton 3-9-4 **C Hutchinson**
6 (6) 00 **BE HOPEFUL** 65 D Menuisier 3-9-4 **S M Levey**
7 (2) 00 **CENTRUM** 9 (P) J & T Gosden 3-9-4 **C T Keane**
8 (3) 2 **DIALSTONE** 36 R Beckett 3-9-4 **Rossa Ryan**
9 (11) **FORTITUDINE** C Appleby 3-9-4 **James Doyle**
10(10) 50- **MID FLIGHT** 271 (T,V) P Charalambous & J Clutterbuck 3-9-4 **R Havlin**
11 (5) 6 **TREBLE BASS** 16 R Varian 3-9-4 **R Dawson**
12(12) 0- **WESTENDER** 377 D Menuisier 3-9-4 **S De Sousa**

7-4 Dialstone, 5-2 Fortitudine, Purple Moon, 12-1 Treble Bass, 16-1 Arklan, Centrum, 25-1 Mid Flight, 33-1 Barachiel.

Wright choice: Dialstone can build on a head second on his debut at Ffos Las **Dangers** Treble Bass, Fortitudine

7.50 Novice Stakes (£6,480: 1m 3f) (11)

1 (7) 62 **CLOUD FOREST** 22 S bin Suroor 4-9-13 **O Murphy**
2 (10) **NO ORDINARY JOE** J73 R Stephens 10-9-13 **L Morris**
3 (2) 51 **CUFF IT** 58 R Spencer 3-9-11 **G Wood**
4 (5) 0-033 **ATLAS MOUNTAIN** 58 A King 3-9-4 **J Mitchell**
5 (3) 53 **KUDOS TOO** 22 W Muir & C Grassick 3-9-4 **L Edmunds**
6 (4) 4 **SHADOW ROAD** 40 J Butler 3-9-4 **David Egan**
7 (9) **WRECK IT RONNIE** Charlie Pike 3-9-4 **T Greatrex**
8 (8) 00- **ANGEL BREEZE** 252 (W,T) Lemos Souza 3-8-13 **Doubtful**
9 (6) 3 **CHURCH WEDDING** 203 (BF) R Beckett 3-8-13 **Rossa Ryan**
10(11) 0- **DOVE TALE** 277 J & T Gosden 3-8-13 **R Havlin**
11 (1) 05 **PERSIAN FLAW** 56 D Menuisier 3-8-13 **S M Levey**

5-2 Cloud Forest, 7-2 Cuff It, 4-1 Atlas Mountain, 5-1 Church Wedding, 8-1 Kudos Too, 14-1 Shadow Road, 16-1 Dove Tale, 20-1 No Ordinary Joe.

Wright choice: Church Wedding, third on her debut here, is bred to relish this trip **Dangers** Cloud Forest, Atlas Mountain

8.20 Handicap (3-Y-O: £6,281: 7f) (8)

1 (6) -1124 **JUMEIRAH SANDS** 22 I Mohammed & J Santos 9-10 **K S McHugh (7)**
2 (3) 21-40 **ANGEL GABRIEL** 26 R Beckett 9-9 **Rossa Ryan**
3 (8) 3-165 **CAPTAIN FOX** 27 R Hughes 9-8 **F Marsh**
4 (1) 102- **PISCEAN STAR** 321 (CD) E Dunlop 9-6 **O Murphy**
5 (2) 32-6 **QUADRILLION** 56 Harry Charlton 9-4 **C T Keane**
6 (4) 2-163 **BLAKEFELL** 44 (BF,D) I Furtado 9-4 **S De Sousa**
7 (5) 12651 **VICTORY ACE** 11 (P,D) J Butler 9-4 **MP Sheehy**
8 (7) 26001 **DOODLING** 53 E J-Houghton 8-11 **C Hutchinson**

7-2 Piscean Star, 4-1 Doodling, 9-2 Jumeirah Sands, 5-1 Quadrillion, 8-1 Blakefell, Victory Ace, Angel Gabriel, 14-1 Captain Fox.

Wright choice: Jumeirah Sands raced wider than ideal when fourth at Wolverhampton **Dangers** Piscean Star, Doodling

8.50 Handicap (£4,187: 2m) (8)

1 (7) 25211 **TUBA** J47 F O'Brien 5-10-2 **G Mangan**
2 (6) 0-510 **ROLAND GARROS** J35 (P,T) Hayley Burton 5-10-1 **A Egan (7)**
3 (8) /11-0 **EASTER ICON** J56 (D) G Brown 7-10-0 **F Marsh**
4 (2) 34321 **CAPTAIN ROBERT** 56 (B) J Fanshawe 4-9-12 **G Wood**
5 (3) 4-460 **GOLDEN GARDEN** 61 (P,T) W Greatrex 4-9-11 **S De Sousa**
6 (1) 61351 **V POWER** 29 (T) T Faulkner 6-9-10 **Zoe Lewis (7)**
7 (4) 14322 **DESERT BELLE** 9 (P) Sir M Prescott 3-9-2 **L Morris**
8 (5) 3/004 **INDIVIDUALISTE** 38 B Lund 8-9-0 **Rose Dawes (5)**

2-1 Captain Robert, 5-2 Desert Belle, 4-1 Tuba, 6-1 V Power, 10-1 Easter Icon, 16-1 Roland Garros, 20-1 Golden Garden, 50-1 Individualiste.

Wright choice: Desert Belle is fitted with cheekpieces after her second at Southwell **Dangers** Captain Robert, Tuba

Brighton

Rob Wright

2.30 Cape Toronada (nap)
3.00 Rovinia
3.30 Glen Nevis
4.00 Port Darwin
4.30 Havana Mojito
5.00 Faustus

Going: good to firm, good in places
Draw: 5f-1m, low best **Sky Sports Racing**

2.30 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 6f) (5)

1 (3) 06303 **LOVE ALIVE** 12 J Butler 9-9 **A Rawlinson**
2 (5) 44423 **HAVANA JAG** 13 (BF) J Gallagher 9-7 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
3 (1) 64214 **CAPE TORONADA** 44 (BF,CD) A Carroll 9-7 **W Carson**
4 (4) 10624 **MISTER MOET** 15 (P,D) S Dixon 9-6 **C Howarth (3)**
5 (2) 54644 **BEACH PARTEE** 21 (V,CD) S Dixon 9-4 **T Heard**

9-4 Havana Jag, 11-4 Cape Toronada, 7-2 Love Alive, 9-2 Mister Moet, 7-1 Beach Partee.

3.00 Classified Stakes (£4,187: 1m) (9)

1 (1) 00665 **ASPIRE TO GLORY** 3 (B,T) D Cunha 5-9-9 **Suraj Narredu**
2 (3) 06000 **CELEBRATING ETHEL** 30 (P,C) A Carroll 7-9-9 **Jack Doughty**
3 (4) 60540 **FIRST ENCOUNTER** 18 (B,D) J Gallagher 5-9-9 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (8) 35420 **RAINBOW SIGN** 23 (T,CD) M Pattinson 8-9-9 **P Cosgrave**
5 (7) 60605 **RIVER WHARFE** 16 (P,CD) A Carroll 8-9-9 **Molly Gunn (5)**
6 (6) 00006 **ROCK MASTER** 14 (P) A Carroll 4-9-9 **C Fallon**
7 (5) 00522 **ROVINIA** 14 (BF) R Teal 4-9-9 **O Lewis (5)**
8 (9) 4030- **SANGARA** 305 (H) Miss S West 4-9-9 **G Bass**
9 (2) -4560 **SKYOLAIRE** 45 (P) Seamus Mullins 3-9-2 **G Downing**

9-4 Rovinia, 7-2 River Wharfe, 5-1 Aspire To Glory, 7-1 Sangara, 8-1 First Encounter, 10-1 Rainbow Sign, 16-1 others.

3.30 Handicap (£10,468: 1m) (9)

1 (5) 04141 **SILCA BAY** 18 (P,D) E J-Houghton 4-10-3 **O Carmichael (7)**
2 (8) 41022 **SEA SUITE** 12 (V) James Owen 4-10-2 **C Fallon**
3 (2) 51364 **NEWFANGLED** 23 (P,CD) J Portman 5-9-10 **R Hornby**
4 (1) 52-00 **HERE I BOW** 86 (W) Oli Rix 3-9-9 **J Peate**
5 (6) 23010 **TEX** 7 (P,T) G Baker 5-9-7 **P Cosgrave**
6 (9) 10005 **NORTHERN EMPIRE** 35 (BF) E Walker 3-9-5 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
7 (7) 2430 **GLEN NEVIS** 25 C Johnston 3-9-4 **J Callan**
8 (3) 34415 **PLAY ME** 27 (CD) J Boyle 4-9-0 **D J Murphy (7)**
9 (4) 24230 **GIANT** 11 (D) I Williams 6-8-13 **H Davies**

11-4 Silca Bay, 10-3 Sea Suite, 6-1 Tex, Play Me, 8-1 Newfangled, 10-1 Giant, Northern Empire, 12-1 Glen Nevis, 33-1 Here I Bow.

4.00 Handicap (£4,187: 1m 2f) (6)

1 (4) 44520 **ANNEXATION** 29 (D) A Carroll 10-9-10 **C Fallon**
2 (3) 000-1 **IT'S LIFE** 11 Kathy Turner 4-9-7 **Charlie Tucker (7)**
3 (5) 0053 **WEST HILL ROSIE** 45 Seamus Mullins 4-9-5 **G Downing**
4 (2) 13221 **BUCKLAND BELLE** 14 Ollie Sangster 3-9-4 **E Greatrex**
5 (6) 06155 **PORT DARWIN** 25 C Johnston 3-9-4 **R Hornby**
6 (1) 46610 **BERYL'S GIRL** 32 (P,CD) E J-Houghton 3-9-4 **R Clutterbuck**

8-13 Buckland Belle, 5-1 Port Darwin, 6-1 It's Life, 10-1 Annexation, Beryl's Girl, 50-1 West Hill Rosie.

4.30 Handicap (£4,187: 7f) (9)

1 (6) 0-600 **REDREDROBIN** 22 (P,D) M Saunders 9-9-12 **E Greatrex**
2 (9) 60245 **THE ORGANISER** 23 (T,C,D) M Pattinson 7-9-10 **P Cosgrave**
3 (8) 52222 **HAVANA MOJITO** 18 (B,CD) J Gallagher 5-9-9 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (1) 06260 **BERNING HOT** 13 (CD) M Attwater 4-9-8 **P Bradley**
5 (3) 0506 **KING CHERRY** 12 (T) S C Williams 3-9-7 **R Hornby**
6 (5) 0-600 **QUITE SWEET** 22 A Carroll 4-9-6 **W Carson**
7 (7) 30003 **VIKING GLORY** 21 (P,T) James Owen 3-9-5 **C Fallon**
8 (2) 50304 **DALEY T** 30 (B) A Carroll 6-8-13 **Jack Doughty**
9 (4) 00640 **MIRAFLORES** 15 R Cook & J Bridger 4-8-12 **R Kavanagh (3)**

15-8 Havana Mojito, 3-1 Viking Glory, 5-1 King Cherry, 15-2 The Organiser, 12-1 Daley T, Miraflores, 16-1 Quite Sweet, 20-1 Berning Hot, Redredrobin.

5.00 Handicap (£4,187: 5f) (7)

1 (4) 1200- **POP DANCER** 339 (CD) A Carroll 9-9-12 **Jack Doughty**
2 (3) 51233 **KENTO** 29 (P,CD) A Carroll 5-9-10 **W Carson**
3 (7) 30015 **SECRET HANDSHEIKH** 21 (V,CD) J Gallagher 8-9-9 **C Fallon**
4 (2) 00262 **FAUSTUS** 29 (B,BF,CD) R Cook & J Bridger 8-9-8 **R Kavanagh (3)**
5 (5) 35552 **STARSONG** 10 (P,CD) M Appleby 7-9-2 **A Rawlinson**
6 (1) 0-055 **TITUS THOR** 33 M Saunders 6-8-10 **E Greatrex**
7 (6) 60536 **COAST** 21 (B) S Dixon 7-8-10 **C Howarth (3)**

5-2 Starsong, 7-2 Kento, 5-1 Secret Handsheikh, Faustus, 8-1 Pop Dancer, Titus Thor, 10-1 Coast.

Pontefract

Rob Wright

2.45 Sunny Orange
3.15 Our Son Oscar
3.45 Garden Oasis
4.15 The Tunguska Event
4.45 Mister Sox
5.15 Division Day

Going: good to firm, good in places
Draw: 5f-6f, low numbers best **Racing TV**

2.45 Handicap (£3,229: 1m 2f) (7)

1 (2) 13-24 **MAX OF STARS** 12 O Pears 6-11-2 **Miss C Brooks (5)**
2 (7) 44423 **SUNNY ORANGE** 8 (P) T Easterby 6-11-1 **Mr T Easterby (3)**
3 (5) 0-200 **GLITTER CODE** 40 (B) E Bethell 4-11-0 **Miss Nell Biker (7)**
4 (6) 30532 **STAR START** 8 (BF,CD) R Carr 6-10-11 **Miss C Parker (5)**
5 (3) 01105 **ANIFICAS BEAUTY** 17 (C) P Winks 7-10-8 **Miss Lauren Sanders (7)**
6 (1) 00030 **QUIRKE ON PAROLE** 13 (D) M Walford 4-10-5 **Miss Alice Cooke (5)**
7 (4) 03U65 **THE PUG** 8 (P,D) O Murphy 6-10-1 **Miss Jemima Stewart (7)**

7-4 Star Start, 15-8 Sunny Orange, 6-1 Glitter Code, 8-1 Max Of Stars, 12-1 The Pug, 14-1 Anificas Beauty, 25-1 Quirke On Parole.

3.15 Maiden Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,940: 6f) (8)

1 (3) **BUGZY** Tom Clover 9-7 **D Tudhope**
2 (7) 0 **CHIEF MINISTER** 18 E J-Houghton 9-7 **J Nicholls (3)**
3 (4) 0 **LONGSHANKS LUKE** 21 (B) P Neville 9-7 **B McHugh**
4 (6) 0 **MUBEHIR** 16 P Midgley 9-7 **D Nolan**
5 (2) **OUR SON OSCAR** K Ryan 9-7 **K Stott**
6 (1) 523 **ROCK STEADY BEAT** 46 K R Burke 9-7 **C Lee**
7 (8) **SANKHUM GALAXY** B Haslam 9-7 **A Mullen**
8 (5) 0 **LADY HENSHAW** 19 P Owens 9-2 **C Beasley**

6-5 Rock Steady Beat, 5-2 Our Son Oscar, 4-1 Bugzy, 10-1 Lady Henshaw, 14-1 Chief Minister, 25-1 Sankhum Galaxy, 50-1 Longshanks Luke, 66-1 Mubehir.

3.45 Handicap (£4,187: 1m) (6)

1 (4) 3-000 **SPIRIT GENIE** 39 (B,T,D) J Candlish 6-9-9 **J Hart**
2 (5) -1060 **ALESSIA FERNANDA** 32 (T,D) D Carroll 6-9-6 **Z Wheatley**
3 (3) 30542 **GARDEN OASIS** 18 (P,CD) T Easterby 11-9-6 **D Allan**
4 (1) 2-000 **NARMAR** 54 (P,T,D) J Candlish 6-9-5 **D Keenan**
5 (2) 50664 **COSMOS RAJ** 4 (P,D) D O'Meara 8-8-13 **Conor Whiteley (5)**
6 (6) 45506 **SOAMES FORSYTE** 51 (P,D) M Herrington 7-8-11 **D E Hogan**

4-9 Garden Oasis, 13-2 Alessia Fernanda, 8-1 Soames Forsyte, 10-1 Spirit Genie, 14-1 Cosmos Raj, 25-1 Narmar.

4.15 Handicap (£4,187: 5f) (10)

1 (5) 20623 **BETWEENTHESTICKS** 29 (P,CD) R Carr 6-9-12 **JP Sullivan**
2 (2) -1500 **LE BEAU GARCON** 8 (D) M & D Easterby 7-9-11 **Joanna Mason**
3 (4) -1330 **SPIRIT OF APPLAUSE** 12 (B,D) T Easterby 6-9-11 **D Allan**
4 (1) 36050 **SAM'S XPRESS** 11 (D) J & S Birkett 6-9-10 **D E Hogan**
5 (8) 00153 **GREAT** 4 S England 4-9-9 **Shane Gray**
6 (10) 03151 **SEA HER EXCEL** 16 (D) I Furtado 3-9-8 **Elle-May Croot (5)**
7 (6) 43006 **RIFFA SPIRIT** 11 D Carroll 3-9-7 **Z Wheatley**
8 (9) 45016 **BIBENDUM** 16 (V,D) J Camacho 5-9-4 **R Sexton**
9 (7) 2310- **MISSMIMI** 256 (W,CD) Miss T Jackson 6-9-4 **W Fentiman (3)**
10 (3) 21364 **THE TUNGUSKA EVENT** 14 (V,BF) J & S Quinn 3-9-4 **J Hart**

3-1 Sea Her Excel, 4-1 Betweenthesticks, 9-2 Great, 6-1 Bibendum, 8-1 The Tunguska Event, 12-1 Spirit Of Applause, 14-1 others.

4.45 Handicap (£5,234: 6f) (9)

1 (1) 04411 **THE GOOD BISCUIT** 10 (CD) R Carr 5-9-12 **Joanna Mason**
2 (7) 60211 **ALFA WHITEBURD** 19 (CD) I Furtado 5-9-9 **J Hart**
3 (8) 35220 **ABERAMA GOLD** 12 (V,D) D O'Meara 9-9-6 **D Tudhope**
4 (3) -0311 **UPPERCASE** 20 Harry Eustace 4-9-6 **Kaiya Fraser**
5 (5) 10064 **MAE AMOR** 7 (V,D) R Menzies 4-9-6 **D Allan**
6 (9) 35624 **EMPEROR CARADOC** 15 (P,C,D) P Midgley 7-9-4 **D Nolan**
7 (4) 03200 **MISTER SOX** 12 (P,CD) T Easterby 6-9-3 **S B Kirrane**
8 (6) 00510 **SUGAR BABY** 12 (D) P Niven 8-9-0 **E Tindall (5)**
9 (2) 553-4 **WILLOLARUPI** 19 (D) D Carroll 5-8-8 **Z Wheatley**

2-1 Uppercase, 11-4 The Good Biscuit, 4-1 Alfa Whiteburd, 13-2 Mae Amor, 10-1 Emperor Caradoc, 16-1 Aberama Gold, 25-1 others.

5.15 Handicap (£5,154: 2m 1f) (3)

1 (2) 506-4 **ANZAC DAY** 45 J & A O'Neill 5-10-2 **C Lee**
2 (3) 31232 **SOMETHING** 14 (P) L Bailey 5-10-1 **B Garritty**
3 (1) 12-15 **DIVISION DAY** 25 (P) B Ellison 4-9-3 **C Beasley**

8-11 Something, 2-1 Division Day, 5-1 Anzac Day.

Yarmouth

Rob Wright

5.40 Indy's Angel
6.10 Minkaas (nb)
6.40 Troublesome Guest
7.10 Time Thief
7.40 Regally Blonde
8.10 Mayflower Rock

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage **Sky Sports Racing**

5.40 Handicap (£3,576: 6f) (7)

1 (4) 00621 **LUMINOUS WARRIOR** 8 (T,C) D Cunha 4-11-7(5ex) **Mr F Yarham**
2 (1) 41103 **SHADES OF MAY** 15 M Usher 6-11-1 **Miss M Jordan**
3 (5) 00065 **ALAFDHAL** 19 (V,CD) P McEntee 8-11-0 **Mr Henry Callan**
4 (3) 00422 **SO GRATEFUL** 12 (D) M & D Easterby 8-10-10 **Miss Serena Brotherton**
5 (2) 00-40 **ENDOWED** 15 (T,D) J & R Flint 9-10-9 **Miss Imogen Mathias (5)**
6 (6) 00220 **INDY'S ANGEL** 18 (P,D) P Kirby 4-10-7 **Mr Jack Loughnane (7)**
7 (7) 0-000 **COILED** 10 (B,T) M Rimell 4-10-7 **Mr Harry Rimell (7)**

7-4 Luminous Warrior, 9-4 So Grateful, 3-1 Shades Of May, 12-1 Indy's Angel, 14-1 Endowed, 16-1 Alafdhal, 50-1 Coiled.

6.10 Maiden Fillies' Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,400: 6f) (10)

1 (8) 50 **AVA LOUISE** 8 P McBride 9-2 **H Crouch**
2 (2) 36 **BABZINI** 75 E J-Houghton 9-2 **C Bishop**
3 (5) 0 **DIVINE CONCERTO** 47 D Cunha 9-2 **S Donohoe**
4 (9) 0 **FOXSBRUSH** 19 J Ryan 9-2 **Liam Wright (5)**
5 (6) 6 **LADY OF HAY** 19 (H) A Balding 9-2 **D Probert**
6 (10) 05 **LILYWHITE HART** 19 D Ivory 9-2 **J F Egan**
7 (1) 3 **MINKAAS** 75 T Kent 9-2 **B Loughnane**
8 (3) **PENSANDO A TE** M Botti 9-2 **M Ghiani**
9 (7) 0 **PURE MAJESTY** 26 W Haggas 9-2 **T Marquand**
10 (4) 32 **SPEED OF SOUND** 12 R Spencer 9-2 **S Osborne**

6-4 Speed of Sound, 6-1 Minkaas, Lilywhite Hart, 13-2 Babzini, 7-1 Lady Of Hay, 8-1 Pensando A Te, Pure Majesty, 50-1 Ava Louise.

6.40 Nursery (2-Y-O: £5,339: 5f) (5)

1 (5) 2301 **DUBAI CHARM** 28 (CD) R Hughes 9-9 **N Callan**
2 (2) 4210 **BEAUTY BOX** 41 (H) J Tate 9-4 **H Crouch**
3 (1) 13000 **WAIT GEORDIE** 18 (D) H Palmer 9-4 **D Probert**
4 (4) 3005 **TROUBLESOME GUEST** 16 G Margarson 9-2 **T Marquand**
5 (3) 221 **DOWMAN** 65 (T,D) G Boughey 9-0 **B Loughnane**

15-8 Dowman, 2-1 Dubai Charm, 5-1 Wait Geordie, Beauty Box, 10-1 Troublesome Guest.

7.10 Novice Stakes (£5,400: 1m 2f) (5)

1 (1) 43 **LIBERATE** 36 Harry Eustace 3-9-7 **P-L Jamin**
2 (5) 0 **SEIGNEUR** 30 (H) J Fanshawe 3-9-7 **D Muscutt**
3 (4) **STATE EXPRESS** S Woods 3-9-7 **T Marquand**
4 (3) **TIME THIEF** Tom Clover 3-9-7 **N Callan**
5 (2) 00- **ANGEL BREEZE** 252 (W,T) Lemos Souza 3-9-0 **M Ghiani**

4-6 Liberate, 7-2 State Express, 4-1 Time Thief, 16-1 Seigneur, 33-1 Angel Breeze.

7.40 Handicap (£3,768: 1m 6f) (7)

1 (7) 00100 **LE ROUGE CHINOIS** 104 (P,D) M Appleby 6-9-9 **T Marquand**
2 (6) -4433 **URBAN WARRIOR** 13 (P,BF) S C Williams 4-9-8 **M Ghiani**
3 (2) 23521 **HIGHLAND HARVEY** 21 (C) Gihan Arnolda 4-9-6 **B Loughnane**
4 (1) 02444 **FORNIDO** 131 (D) M Attwater 4-9-4 **S C Cronin (5)**
5 (5) 05634 **REGALLY BLONDE** 19 (B,D) B Case 7-9-3 **S Osborne**
6 (5) 05226 **SPACEAGE LOVE SONG** 15 (P) M Bell 4-9-2 **H Crouch**
7 (3) 64540 **CLOUDY ROSE** 29 J Berry 8-9-1 **D Probert**

11-8 Highland Harvey, 5-2 Urban Warrior, 13-2 Fornido, 10-1 Regally Blonde, Spaceage Love Song, 14-1 Le Rouge Chinois, Cloudy Rose.

8.10 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 5f) (8)

1 (3) 420-2 **BANANA** 33 (P,T,D) S Dixon 7-9-9 **Taryn Langley (5)**
2 (2) 25305 **CABEZA DE LLAVE** 15 (D) M Attwater 7-9-9 **S C Cronin (5)**
3 (8) 36264 **CHARGING BULL** 13 (H,T) Michael Keady 4-9-9 **T Marquand**
4 (5) 00000 **CHIEDOZIE** 5 (V) P McEntee 5-9-9 **Grace McEntee**
5 (7) 20006 **SHE WENT WHOOSH** 35 (P,T,D) S Dixon 4-9-9 **Mikkel Mortensen (5)**
6 (6) 0400 **MAYFLOWER ROCK** 34 D Cunha 3-9-6 **S Donohoe**
7 (1) 430 **PURE PASSION** 13 S C Williams 3-9-6 **C R Lyons (7)**
8 (4) 60-65 **SHINING GUEST** 40 G Margarson 3-9-6 **M Ghiani**

13-8 Banana, 7-2 Charging Bull, Cabeza De Llave, 8-1 Mayflower Rock, 10-1 Shining Guest, Pure Passion, 33-1 She Went Whoosh, 66-1 Chiedozie.

Yesterday's racing results

Catterick

Going: Good to firm (good in places)

2.15 (7f 6yd) 1, **Waakabb** (Jason Hart, 7-4); 2, National Pride (11-8); 3, Breaking The Habit (125-1). 6 ran. 1½l, 8l. S & E Crisford.

2.45 (7f 6yd) 1, **Iconic Times** (S D Bowen, 1-1 fav); 2, Without Delay (10-1); 3, Rain Cap (9-2). 7 ran. ns, 2¼l. J Candlish.

3.15 (1m 7f 189yd) 1, **Free World** (Cieren Fallon, 2-1 fav); 2, Star Of Jupiter (14-1); 3, Fleur De Mer (8-1). 9 ran. 7l, nk. Ian Williams.

3.45 (5f 212yd) 1, **Miss Rainbow** (Connor Beasley, 5-2); 2, Captain Cess (11-10 fav); 3, Battenburg Belle (9-1). 8 ran. 1¼l, 3½l. Miss Tracy Waggott.

4.15 (1m 4f 13yd) 1, **Halimede** (L Morris, 9-4); 2, Hansteen (8-11 fav); 3, Muhib (7-1). 8 ran. 5l, 1¼l. Sir Mark Prescott.

4.45 (5f) 1, **Without Flaw** (Warren Fentiman, 3-1); 2, Gwen Tennyson (13-2); 3, Doralee (6-4 fav). 7 ran. 1l, 1l. Miss T Jackson.

Placepot: £12.10
Quadpot: £11.00
Jackpot: £1,426.90

Ffos Las

Going: Good

2.30 (6f) 1, **Safari Dream** (Oisin Murphy, 11-4); 2, Diamondinthedark (22-1); 3, The Coffee Pod (11-4). 7 ran. SH, ¾l. B R Millman.

3.00 (7f 80yd) 1, **Perfect Nation** (Billy Loughnane, 13-8 fav); 2, George Cross (9-2); 3, Artemis Star (22-1). 7 ran. 1l, 1l. G Boughey.

3.30 (7f 80yd) 1, **Lerwick** (Billy Loughnane, 10-1); 2, Cypriot Diaspora (13-8fav); 3, Grand Vista (14-1). 9 ran. 2½l, 1¼l. D M Loughnane.

4.00 (7f 80yd) 1, **Kaleidoscope Eyes** (R P Downey, 3-1); 2, Piazza (12-1); 3, Rosemary's Rose (Evens fav). 8 ran. ½l, 1l. B J Llewellyn.

4.30 (1m) 1, **Wootz** (Ray Dawson, 10-11 fav); 2, Mountain Of Light (16-1); 3, Arbaawy (13-8). 8 ran. 6½l. HD. R Varian.

5.00 (1m) 1, **Mythological Star** (Billy Loughnane, 4-6 fav); 2, Hurricane Laughter (11-4); 3, Somethingintheair (12-1). 5 ran. 1½l. 4l. D & C Kubler.

5.30 (1m 3f 209y) 1, **A Daughters Love** (Jack Doughty, 10-1); 2, Grindleton (5-1); 3, Praise Indeed (7-1). 10 ran. 10l, 4l. D Flood.

Placepot: £11.90
Quadpot: £2.10

Lingfield Park

Going: Standard

5.18 (7f 1yd) 1, **Mister Mojito** (Jack Callan, 9-4 fav); 2, Rogue Dynasty (5-2); 3, Dandy Khan (14-1). 11 ran. ¾l, 2l. T Kent.

5.48 (7f 1yd) 1, **Fortunate** (Oliver Carmichael, 16-1); 2, Dun Eideann (16-1); 3, Steamy Wonder (18-1). 10 ran. 1½l, 17½l. Eve Johnson Houghton.

6.18 (7f 1yd) 1, **Potters Margot** (R Havlin, 25-1); 2, Minnal (7-4); 3, Lushill (10-1). 9 ran. 1l, ¾l. M Crawley.

6.48 (6f 1yd) 1, **Elvetham** (Jack Gilligan, 13-2); 2, Style King (15-8); 3, Just Jump (3-1). 10 ran. NR: Phoenix Moon. ½l, 11½l. C Allen.

7.18 (1m 6f) 1, **Tabasko** (Ashley Lewis, 4-5 fav); 2, Scarlet Moon (15-2); 3, Russian Rumour (10-1). 4 ran. nk, ½l. E Walker.

7.48 (1m 3f 133yd) 1, **Hope Rising** (Rob Hornby, 2-1); 2, Douglas Dc (6-1); 3, Koko Blue (11-8 fav). 7 ran. 5½l, 1¼l. Jamie Snowden.

8.18 (1m 1f) 1, **Offiah's Boy** (Taylor Fisher, 5-6 fav); 2, Gert Lush (9-2); 3, Monks Mead (11-2). 6 ran. 2l, ½l. J Tickle.

Placepot: £746.40
Quadpot: £14.70

Results

Football

Europa League third qualifying round first leg Larne 0 Iberia Tbilisi 0, Shamrock Rovers 3 Egnatia 1.

Cricket

The Hundred: Sun Risers Leeds v London Spirit
Men

Headingley (London Spirit won toss): Sun Risers Leeds (4pts) beat London Spirit by 37 runs

Sun Risers Leeds	(balls)	
M R Marsh c Brevis b Milne	76	(37)
†R D Rickelton not out	94	(42)
H C Brook c Overton b Willey	55	(18)
D W Lawrence not out	10	(3)
Extras (w 2, lb 4)	6	
Total (2 wkts, 100 balls)	**241**	

*Z Crawley, M L Revis, B A Carse, M J Potts, N Ellis, R J W Topley and A Ahmed did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-148, 2-231.

Bowling Willey 15-0-35-1; Milne 20-0-37-1; Coles 20-0-30-0; Zampa 10-0-33-0; Tye 20-0-42-0; Overton 10-0-37-0; Livingstone 5-0-23-0.

| London Spirit

Sport Rugby union

What will appeal to fans: history or Pollock's hype?

Stuart Barnes

Henry Pollock is in the news again. Let's see, what can Eddie Hearn do to create headlines? Social media plays its role to perfection. A yacht in the Mediterranean, some harmless videos of the Northampton Saints and England player throwing himself into the warm and ever more polluted sea and — yes — headlines designed to make a splash. What a contrast with what is about to be unveiled in South Africa.

Friday night marks the start of the "Greatest Rivalry" tour, with the All Blacks kicking off the trip against Stormers in the shadow of Table Mountain.

Never mind that the core of Stormer Springboks are in Argentina with the rest of their Test team for a one-off international, this is serious rugby news.

It's a throwback to tours in the amateur days. Eight matches is still a little light compared to old-fashioned Lions tours and New Zealand tours to the UK and Ireland, but it is real rugby. Raw, young talent will emerge as the traditional and present world No 1 and No 2 teams battle it out for supremacy one year away from the World Cup.

Memories are evoked, as timeless as pre-internet times can be; yet amid all the purity beats a heart of unfettered professionalism. The silly boastfulness of the tour's title is an obvious plea for the past to do its bit of marketing for the present age. Rugby history is a foot soldier for a tour that is scheduled to take place every two years.

Add the growing globalisation of World Cups, in whatever sport, as well as the Lions and it is hard to see how Argentina — who are not on the Lions' agenda — can develop into one of the great rugby nations. The Pumas are being thrown to the wolves. For South Africans, Kiwis and, quite frankly, anyone else whose heart beats to the rhythm of rugby, this forthcoming series has set pulses racing before Friday night's kick-off in Cape Town. We've all stopped caring about the long term.

South Africa v New Zealand excites because they are the best teams in the world. It was (most of the time) ever thus. In South Africa, history is being used to bring that past headlining its way into the 21st century. In a financially troubled world, many Springboks play in Japan to alleviate the pressure of paying some of the world's best rugby players what they "deserve". Who would begrudge Pieter-Steph du Toit, Cheslin Kolbe (who is returning to Stormers for next season), Faf de Klerk and Jesse Kriel salaries that will go an extremely long way in their homeland?

Their absence weakens the provincial power of South Africa but guarantees a player's Test-match longevity, shared also by Kiwis including Ardie Savea. These are men who have a proven Test pedigree. The Japanese market can sell some of the world's finest for their domestic rugby audience. Which takes us back to where we started this column: Henry Pollock.

While Pollock was flipping into the sea and embracing Finn Russell, Hearn's other signed-up rugby superstar, the 21-year-old was being touted by his manager as Northampton's £1 million man. The pitch is predominantly economic (Hearn knows more about marketing talent than he does rugby union) and it is not without reason from a money point of view.

Pollock is the most devastating talent to come out of England in a very long time. He knows it and so does his manager. But as Bob Dylan sang on *Desolation Row*, "Everybody's shouting, 'Which side are you on?'" The more conservative, traditional rugby fan base is sick of the headlines and the displays of petulance on the pitch. There is, however, a growing audience that does not read newspapers. Rather it is driven by the algorithm of the internet. Celebrities no longer have names.

In the past players had to prove themselves, build their reputation at the highest level. These are different days. It's not as if Pollock isn't both box office and brilliant for his club. And it's not as if he doesn't deliver when Steve Borthwick introduces him into Test rugby from the bench. Yet he's still relatively fresh to the game.

Here are a few questions. Is the economy of rugby driven purely by the imperative to sell a few thousand shirts? Does television have the right to demand the "showbiz" when it signs a broadcast deal? How does the market-driven online world compare to being part of a successful side? And what makes for such success?

Good players are an imperative but team spirit is perhaps even more vital. Siya Kolisi arguably isn't the best open-side in South Africa but his magnificent leadership that cements the group ensures Rassie Erasmus doesn't select simply on ability.

Sport may well be a business but the business of the sport is to win. That's the guaranteed way to ensure the full house signs. It's the way to ensure that, despite the failure of their great teams to dominate the URC, Springboks fans are flocking to see a squad that is much greater than the sum of its provincial parts.

Backflips from a yacht aren't a reason to sneer. But nor are they a reason to proclaim Pollock as a character or the saviour of the English game. Russell — also on the boat — has been sniffing around seven-figure salaries for years. His worth to Bath was never revealed more than in the losing of their Prem semi-final against Exeter Chiefs. He has earned it and is worth Bruce Craig's money.

Pollock is perhaps worth more than Russell — or Kriel — as a commodity but he's still in the process of becoming a core player. To elevate him from his Saints salary of £150,000 to £1 million is to endanger the wellbeing of a balanced team. Rugby is about the team.

To raise the subject of taking a break mid-season to play in an Olympics, for which Great Britain Sevens has yet to qualify, is to open the forums to mockery and resentment. Antoine Dupont, it has been pointed out, did it to gold-medal effect in 2024 but he was the world's best player at the time and the Olympics were hosted by France. Pollock would doubtless be a raging success but his individual achievements in the sevens sphere would be offset by the fact this young man should be aiming to become the best rugby player in the world, not the most publicised and best paid.

If Pollock wants to shoot for the stars and greatness, he needs to heed the advice of Phil Dowson, his club coach, as much if not more than that of Hearn. If celebrity and its fiscal rewards are the back-row forward's main motivation, he seems in safe hands.

"Greatest Rivalry" to be shown on Sky Sports, page 52

Pollock knows how to make a splash with videos he posts on social media

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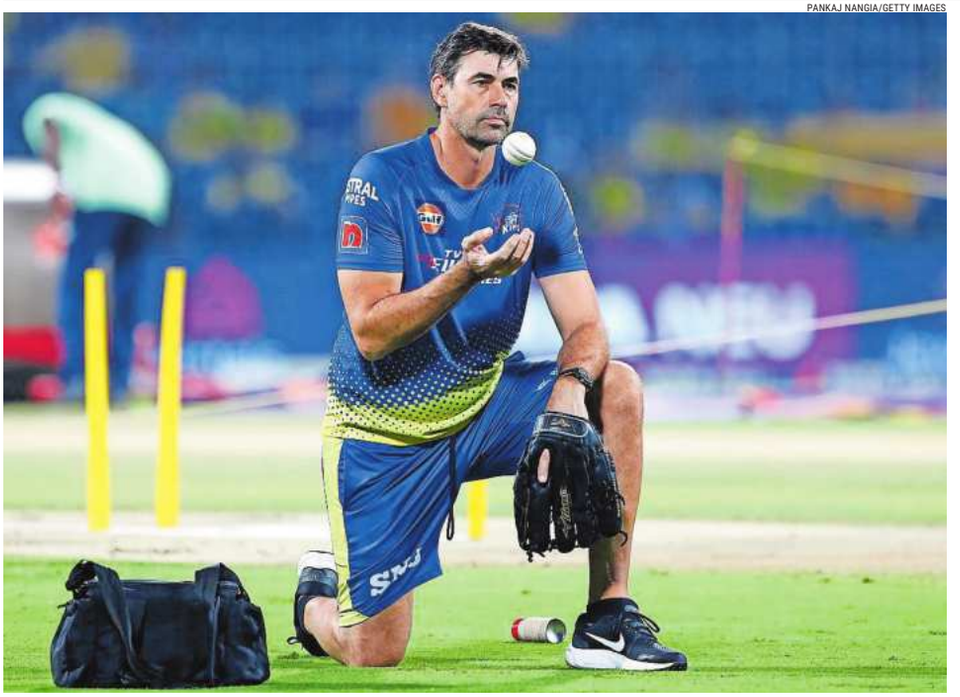


Fleming, the new England Test coach, accepts that the English game must do much more to nurture homegrown coaches

Why do we struggle to produce top coaches?

There is nothing wrong with a foreigner coaching England, but our current system needs radical change, writes **Steve James**

"Not being able to produce your own coach, and not having the will or patience to work on putting that right, suggests something is rotten at the core." Reading these words recently from Martin Samuel about England's football scenario struck the loudest of chords as regards our cricketing set-up.

And this was before the New Zealander Stephen Fleming had been appointed head coach of the Test team. To replace the New Zealander Brendon McCullum, who remains white-ball coach, having succeeded the Australian Matthew Mott in that role.

Yes, McCullum succeeded an Englishman, Chris Silverwood, in the Test role, but this century Silverwood and Peter Moores (who had two goes at the job) have been the only Englishmen at the helm of England's Test side, with the Zimbabweans Duncan Fletcher and Andy Flower and the Australian Trevor Bayliss, as well as McCullum, enjoying much more success.

This is not a new story, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with a foreigner being the best man for the job, but at what stage are we going to accept that our coaching system is, to use Samuel's word, "rotten" and that radical change is required?

In fairness, the managing director of England men's cricket, Rob Key, knows this and he has put some things in motion to rectify it, like fast-tracking prominent former players such as Andrew Flintoff, Graeme Swann, Moeen Ali, and even those still playing, like Ben Stokes, through the coaching process, but, as ever with English cricket, he has faced tremendous opposition at every turn.

Indeed, listening and talking to Key is like being transported back to Fletcher's time, when the Zimbabwean recognised with the sharpest of eyes all the problems in English cricket, and had a bevy of good ideas as to how to solve them, but found that even the smallest constructive criticism of the status quo was met with astonishment and animosity. Key, a sharp thinker on the game, has faced the same.

County cricket is a wonderful institution — I owe my life to it — but insularity and pictures taken using the narrowest of lenses are too often its downfall for players, coaches, administrators and supporters. The cricket is often interesting and entertaining, with its quality sometimes validated by comments from foreigners tasting it, but we should always be wary of those Trojan horses because they arrive for the final part of their cricketing education and most know that taking the full journey in an English (or Welsh) pathway would rarely produce the same results.

Essentially it is a flawed system. Australia, India and indeed tiny New Zealand have much better systems for producing players and coaches. And the flaws in the coaching set-up here are much more easily fixed than those on the playing side, where the riddle of too many counties can never be solved.

The hardest part in this country in terms of identifying and nurturing good coaches is that the media work is too accessible and too lucrative. Too often the best minds, like our own Mike Atherton and his sidekick from school and university days, Nasser Hussain, are talking to us, the viewers, about technique or tactics rather than to the players in the dressing rooms.

But the problem runs much deeper than that. For too long coaching has been about numbers and money, and how to coach, rather than about what you are supposed to be coaching. The technical aspects have long been discarded in coaching courses. Those of us old enough to have attended one run in Wales by the late Tom Cartwright, the former Warwickshire, Somerset, Glamorgan and England bowler, will know that the basics of all aspects of the game had to be totally understood and demonstrated. No longer.

The ECB's highest award — the level four, which is now known as the specialist coach course — costs £9,500 to take and has become a mere money-making exercise, with all abilities of coach permitted to do it. There should be a course above all others, for those coaching in the professional game.

There is always much discussion about whether you need to have played at the top level to coach at the top level, but cricket is such a complicated sport, in terms of technique, tactics and mental aptitude, that experience at a high level is almost vital. There will always be exceptions, and good on them, but they must be bloody good. Cricketers as a breed can be very unforgiving of those who make mistakes in environments to which they are not accustomed.

Having said that, too many ex-professionals fall into coaching simply because they cannot do anything else. The best ones are identified early and run the gamut of coaching experiences from the very youngest to the most experienced of players. They soon realise that the hours required are even greater than when playing. Some serious dedication is required.

Pay can be a big hindrance. Beyond the international and franchise roles, it is often a pittance. For some of my group coaching sessions this winter I received a whopping increase from £15 an hour to £17.50. Fortunately I have a proper job in this parish and do the coaching for enjoyment, and as a genuine attempt to help the future generations. But it is easy to see why so many coaches pull out of pathway systems and instead pursue one-on-one coaching, many then battling each other on social media for more clients without an iota of self-awareness.

Young players these days receive advice from so many quarters that it is no wonder they are confused. Nothing is joined up. Counties often use their own former players as assistant coaches because they simply cannot tempt those from other counties to uproot for such small salaries.

A key (with and without the capital letter) appointment has been Troy Cooley as elite national pace bowling lead because he can hopefully influence the coaches as much as the players. He is, of course, Australian but a depth chart of English fast-bowling coaches should develop beneath him. And that should be the case at the counties too. Those players deemed suitable and promising should be ushered into coaching as soon as possible. Twelve-month contracts make this so simple in the winter: there is only so much practice and training one can do.

Thankfully, Fleming is on board with all this. As Key said when announcing his appointment: "One of the first things he spoke about was actually that we have a duty to bring coaches through, to upskill, to give them experiences. Stephen spoke about it at length. It's not a quick fix. We have tried and we are trying with different levers to solve that. Next time, you don't want someone to go: 'I have to appoint an English coach.' What you want is English coaches to be top of the list."

Too right you do. Glamorgan's Richard Dawson was undoubtedly in the conversation this time, but you suspect he is more a No 2 at present than the main man. The next time England are looking for a coach that, and much more, needs to have changed. Not to upset my old county, but Dawson as Fleming's assistant now would make perfect sense, slotting in for some series until he is ready to take over fully. It's called succession planning.

Stokes: I would love to be England coach in future

Elizabeth Ammon

Ben Stokes has criticised the decision not to appoint Harry Brook as his successor as Test captain and revealed he would like to be the England head coach in the future.

Stokes announced his retirement from international cricket during the third Test against New Zealand in June and gave his backing to Brook, his vice-captain, to take over. Rob Key, England's managing director, decided it was "too soon" for Brook, the white-ball captain, to lead in all three formats and appointed Joe Root to the red-ball role instead.

Stokes ruled out returning to play in Ashes next summer

"If you think someone is going to be a good captain or a good leader, just give it to them," Stokes said on the *For the Love of Cricket* podcast. "Brooky was made vice-captain — I'm not there any more but even when I missed that Test match [the second Test against New Zealand, for which Root was captain], I was like, 'He's vice-captain.' I sort of understand the reasoning [behind] why they were saying it but what message is that sending to him? He's vice-captain and the captain is not playing but he's not captain. And then the same again here."

Stephen Fleming was appointed as Test head coach after Brendon McCullum was sacked following the 2-1 series defeat by New Zealand. Stokes believes that he is a good appointment but expressed concern about Root, 35, in his second tenure as captain.

"I've worked with Flem before but I told Joe — I said my only worry is just you. And that's all I really care about now, because I've seen what he went through and how much he put himself through for someone. He's always put the team first — he always comes second. And that's my only concern with it, knowing what he went through last time he was in charge of the team."

Stokes revealed that he will have more to say on his international retirement "when the time is right".

"I'm not going into all that detail now and now isn't that time — I don't want to come across as bitter yet. It was a sticky situation for quite a few people involved."

The 35-year-old all-rounder seemed to rule out any possibility that he could make a shock return for the Ashes next summer, replying "definitely" when asked by Jos Buttler, the podcast host and Stokes's former team-mate with England, whether he had retired. Stokes, however, has his sights on coaching England in the future.

"Would I love to be coach of England one day? Absolutely, I'd love to be able to do that," Stokes, who has already taken some steps towards coaching by assisting at a training camp with England Lions this year, said. "Do I think it is going to happen? I don't know. I just really like the idea of being in some form of leadership away from playing."

Stokes has taken his level three coaching certificate and was coaching young players at Durham when he was hit in the face by a ball in February, suffering injuries that required surgery.

"I didn't really remember what had gone on until the next day — I just remember seeing the ball coming at my face and in my brain I thought, 'Oh f***,' and it feels slow motion from there. I've got four plates and 16 screws — they went in through the side of my eye. Since going back into the nets my net awareness is off the scale."

Stokes added that he had no regrets about England's trip to Noosa during the Ashes, when Ben Duckett was filmed seemingly drunk while struggling to find his way back to the team's hotel. That led to further criticism that the squad had a drinking culture.

"I think cricket just has a drinking culture and it hasn't changed," Stokes said. "The game has gone more professional over the years but the one thing I think has stayed within cricket is the relationship with alcohol.

"So for people who think the English cricket team has a drinking culture, I would say no, I would just say cricket has a culture that is associated with alcohol."

Since his international retirement, Stokes has featured for Durham in the One-Day Cup and is expected to play in the County Championship for the rest of the season before seeking franchise contracts over the winter.

Infantino's key allies may have turned on him

CONTINUED FROM BACK

give in to that." Fifa has been contacted for comment. So far only a small number of countries have offered their public backing to Infantino. Significantly Saudi Arabia, which has been a key ally, is yet to declare its support.

Sources said a group of senior staff within Fifa had a management meeting yesterday without Infantino present, and all bar one opposed the World Cup sell-off scheme.

That development, along with the statements from Wenger, the former Arsenal manager, and the Grafstrom email will heap further pressure on Infantino to resign, with key allies now appearing to have turned on him.

Wenger said: "The recent events at Fifa deserve some clarity from my side. I was not involved in this strategic plan and first became aware of the project through media reports.

"The decision to withdraw the project was absolutely necessary and beyond question, because I firmly believe in an independent Fifa that serves our game with commitment, transparency and integrity."

It is understood that Grafstrom had not been in favour of Infantino's plan to set up a company called Fifa Forward Enterprise (FFE) with a stake of it owned by private investors led by Joshua Kushner, the brother of Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared.

Grafstrom sent an email to Fifa staff saying: "We have all been thrown into the middle of a turmoil, which is difficult to comprehend and accept, but, as secretary general, I urge you to remain focused on what has always united us: serving football and serving our 211 member associations.

"A sad and reproachable series of events — which were thankfully concluded with the FFE project permanently abandoned — for as much as we feel dismayed by them, should not overshadow this reality. I assure you that you as members of the administration, you will be defended and safeguarded from the political context we currently experience. You do not need to worry.

"Individuals, unstable moments and unfortunate episodes come and go. The institution, its mission and its responsibility towards world football continue, and that is why we should always keep our professionalism, sense of perspective and composure."

Infantino's opponents are already planning for life after him, with some believing there should be a change to the structure by rotating the Fifa presidency around the confederation presidents every four years. Others are concerned that would put too much power into the hands of a chief executive.

Prince Ali ran against Infantino for the Fifa presidency in 2016, and his lengthy statement illustrated the pressures faced by national associations.

Jordan qualified for the World Cup but many of their fans were not granted visas to enter the US even though they had tickets — "which we also know were sold at exorbitant prices" — and Prince Ali said the Jordan FA was heavily taxed by the US government, while those who were based in and played in Canada and Mexico did so tax-free.

He added: "We have been waiting for reward money for our players since December for the Arab Cup in Qatar, which is a Fifa event … while at the same time Fifa brags about how many billions they have in reserve. Fifa has been refusing to help us on any of these or other matters — until it was verbally communicated to me during the World Cup that if I endorsed Infantino it would go a long way to helping our FA out. We pride ourselves in Jordan in upholding ethical values."

EUROPA PRESS SPORTS /GETY IMAGES

Chavarría helped Rayo Vallecano reach the Conference League final last season

Chelsea close in on Chavarría as Cucurella replacement

Chelsea are finalising a move for the Rayo Vallecano left wingback Pep Chavarría (Peter Rutzler writes). The 28-year-old, who would replace Marc Cucurella, is due to travel to London in the next 48 hours to complete the transfer.

Rayo's valuation of the player jumped during the negotiations but a compromise is close to being reached.

The Spaniard is set to become the latest signing for Chelsea under Xabi Alonso, after the arrivals of Jordan Henderson, Danny Welbeck, Marco Palestra, Morgan Rogers and Maxence Lacroix, as well as Emmanuel Emegha, Geovany Quenda and Dastan Satpayev, who joined on pre-agreed transfers.

Chavarría spent much of his early years in the Spanish lower divisions before moving from Real Zaragoza to Rayo, in La Liga, in 2022. He made 44 appearances for the club last season as they reached the Conference League final.

Chelsea sold Cucurella to Real Madrid for £51.8 million this summer.

Meanwhile, Ipswich Town have signed Florentino on a five-year contract from Burnley for up to £19 million (Gary Jacob writes).

The 26-year-old midfielder made 31 Premier League appearances last season.

Florentino joined Burnley from Benfica on loan in 2025, before the deal was made permanent in June. He won two league titles with Benfica and had loan spells at Monaco and Getafe.

Crystal Palace are in advanced talks to sign Zavier Gozo, 19, for about £11.1 million from Real Salt Lake. The American scored six goals and five assists in 16 games last season as a wingback.

Middlesbrough are close to agreeing a deal with Manchester United to sign Radek Vitek, the 22-year-old goalkeeper.

Szoboszlai: Everyone is motivated to win for quiet man Iraola

Ian Whittell Chicago

Andoni Iraola may be short on words, at least in the dressing room immediately after a match, but his "tour captain" Dominik Szoboszlai believes that the new Liverpool head coach offers hope of a fresh start after the struggles of last season.

Szoboszlai skippered Liverpool on a three-match tour to the US that brought two victories and a defeat and also served as a "getting to know you" exercise in which players became acquainted with Iraola's methods.

After an often turbulent season in which Liverpool's failed title defence cost Arne Slot his job, Szoboszlai is welcoming the chance for a much-needed new beginning under the Dutchman's successor.

"He doesn't speak after the game," the Hungary international said. "I think every manager is different in his own way. That's how he is. He always prefers to speak the day after the game, which is fine for everyone. We have to get used to this.

"Obviously a new manager, everyone is motivated. I see in everybody's eyes that they want to play. And if you want to play, you have to give your best. And from there, the manager is going to decide who is going to play. But everybody is on zero right now.

"I can't wait, honestly. I feel we are ready to go again and take motivation from last season. Because it was not the best we could do. We didn't end up where we wanted to. So now we're going to go for it again."

Like most Premier League teams, Liverpool's pre-season plans have been hampered by players returning late after the World Cup and a slow summer of transfer business so far — an issue that, in his role as captain, Szoboszlai has been quizzed about in recent days.

Szoboszlai was Iraola's captain for Liverpool's tour to the United States

"You know my answer for this," he said. "That's not my job to tell you who we have to sign or if we have to sign someone. If the guys above and the manager decide to sign someone, we are very happy and are going to welcome him well, or them. If they decide not to, then we have to do something special with this squad."

Similarly, Szoboszlai was non-committal over the issue of where he would prefer to play under Iraola, his third manager in a little over three years since he signed from RB Leipzig for £60 million.

Midfield, No 10, wide right and even right back have featured in his job description but, certainly publicly, he is not expressing a preference.

"I didn't speak to [Iraola] about that, but I think sooner or later he's going to tell me where he wants me to play," Szoboszlai said. "Or if he doesn't tell me, he's going to put me where he wants me to play.

"So it doesn't matter where he plays me, I'm going to be there for the team, for him, and try to play my best."

Szoboszlai was one of the few bright points amid Liverpool's struggles last season, to the extent that he enters the new season with a contract extension that will keep him at the club until the summer of 2031, a gesture that clearly indicates the management see him as a future cornerstone of the team.

To that end, and with Virgil van Dijk beginning his delayed pre-season back in Liverpool, Szoboszlai was named captain for the tour and would appear to be a leading candidate to become Van Dijk's vice-captain in the coming campaign.

Not that the role proved uneventful on tour, with video footage seeming to show Szoboszlai and Curtis Jones disagreeing after the Hungarian handed the armband to Kostas Tsimikas, not Jones, when he was substituted in the 1-0 win against Wrexham. It appeared little more than an exchange of opinions at the time and Szoboszlai was quick to downplay talk of a row.

"It was never a debate between us three. We just discussed something on the pitch, which, actually, after was made very big," he laughed. "But next time we will manage to do it in the changing room. But no, nobody was angry at anyone. It's all cleared. We are cool, everybody.

"There hasn't been any conversation [about vice-captaincy]. Obviously we have Virgil as the captain. We have Ali [Alisson]. We have Joe Gomez. So there was no conversation at all.

"Obviously Ali is not here [in the US], Joe is injured, so it was a very proud moment to have it. And let's see. It's not my choice. It's not fixed.

"If you get offered the vice-captaincy in Liverpool FC, you're going to take it. It would be a proud moment for me. But I respect everybody. So either way, who it's going to be, we're going to follow them."

Move aside, Spider-Man: Wrexham take over New York

Welsh side's Hollywood journey leads them to the entertainment capital of the world, and top-flight dream is not that far-fetched, writes **Ian Whittell**

ANGELA WEISS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rio Ngumoha, of Liverpool, battles with George Thomason, of Wrexham, during the pre-season friendly at Yankee Stadium

A little over six decades since a Liverpool rock'n'roll band conquered New York and changed the face of global entertainment for ever, bemused tourists in Times Square this week were treated to an altogether different kind of invasion from a group hailing not too far from Merseyside.

In fact, Liverpool themselves were also in town this week but it was their near neighbours (geographically if not in terms of the football record books) Wrexham who were most obviously basking in their moment at the centre of the world's entertainment capital.

It might have been slightly incongruous, positioned alongside sky-high video advertising hoardings for the latest Spider-Man movie and Broadway shows, but a Championship football club launching their new kit with huge electronic billboards on this stage was, to quote their chief executive Michael Williamson, a "pinch-me" moment.

Wrexham, who were playing Liverpool in a friendly, and Hollywood have been comfortable, if unlikely, bedfellows ever since Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney bought them more than five years ago.

A run of three successive promotions was halted only last season when they missed out on the play-offs on the final day. Still, every step of the journey has been captured by a documentary series and led to the club enjoying unprecedented exposure that has them claiming 30 million fans worldwide, 41 per cent of them outside Europe and more than 10 million in North America.

Market research is one thing, Times Square swarming with supporters in Wrexham shirts — most, clearly, from North America — and Williamson being asked to ring the ceremonial bell that opened trading on the Nasdaq stock exchange last Tuesday, is quite another.

"Listen, it is absolutely a pinch-me moment," said Williamson, a 54-year-old American and former Inter Milan executive who joined Wrexham, then preparing for life in League One, two years ago.

"Obviously, it's an incredible experience for me personally. But more importantly, what is amazing is to think that the story of Wrexham and where it's come from, and where it is today, to be here in New York City playing against Liverpool at Yankee Stadium.

"And to be able to ring the opening bell on Nasdaq and have all of our kit launch revealed in Times Square, it is truly a remarkable moment. And when you really go back to think about how resilient the club has been over the decades, to see it arrive here is just something everyone should be proud of. This is the moment of success."

Even allowing for the profile of their owners, the sight of a British football club that three years ago was just climbing out of non-League competition plastered all over downtown New York was remarkable.

When he took over in 2021, the manager Phil Parkinson could not even put together a proper pre-season amid Covid, as he was struggling with the disease himself. He took on Manchester United and Leeds United in Tampa and Liverpool, ending a two-week US tour with a 1-0 defeat by Sunderland in McElhenney's hometown of Philadelphia on Sunday.

"The documentary has afforded us the opportunity to be able to amplify our messages and that has resonated with a global fan base," Williamson said. "It's captured the hearts and minds of millions of fans worldwide.

"Which is why we come to New York City, we had tremendous support in Tampa, but also in Australia, New Zealand and around the world. We have that kind of strong fan base that cares and is passionate about the club but, even more importantly, about the community. That's what they've connected to. That's what they've fallen in love with.

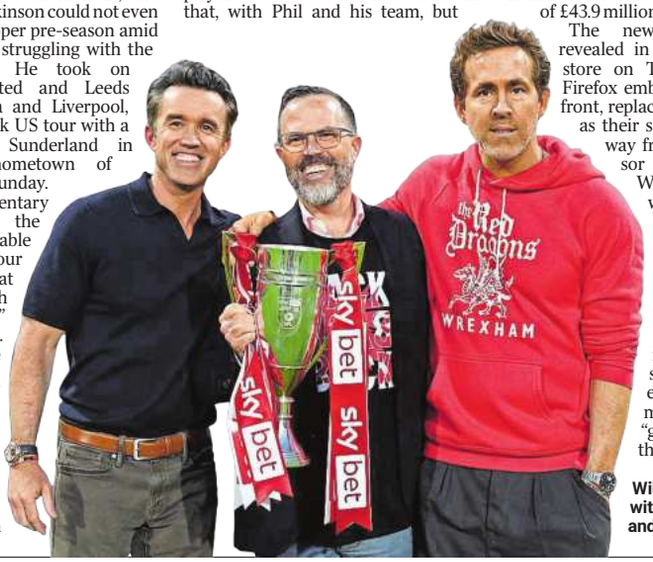
"It just allows us to be able to say, 'OK, we have a brand that isn't your traditional Championship club brand.' So that certainly allows us to have the opportunity to make strategic investments and growth.

"And that's what we're really doing. Investing in strategic growth. So when you look at it, it's not all about the players. Of course we've had success in that, with Phil and his team, but what it also allowed us to do was invest off the pitch."

That has been evidenced by, among other things, a huge new club shop in the centre of Wrexham, renovation of the stadium and big investments in training grounds and the women's programmes, all of which will continue to feature in the documentary.

The documentary also explains how the latest Wrexham financial figures, at the end of the 2024-25 season when they were in League One, showed turnover of £33.3 million, well over half of which was generated from outside the UK, primarily North America. Estimates for 2025-26 predict revenue of £43.9 million.

The new Wrexham kit, revealed in the "Pelé Soccer" store on Times Square, has Firefox emblazoned across the front, replacing United Airlines as their sponsor. It is a long way from the shirt sponsor pre-takeover, Ifor Williams Trailers, for whom Reynolds produced a hilarious series of advertisements as consolation for ending their five-year deal. Given Reynolds' hourly rate as a pitch person, it presumably equated to a multi-million-pound "golden goodbye" for the local company.



Williamson, centre, with McElhenney and Reynolds

Of course, no amount of Hollywood glamour or "Q" rating — the marketing measure used in the US to gauge brand awareness — will help Parkinson win the fourth and surely hardest promotion of all, to the Premier League. But if there is a sense that Wrexham, whose new Kop stand will not be fully operational for another 12 months, have plateaued, their owners do not want to hear it.

"I was on a call and Ryan said, 'Well, when we arrive in the Champions League …' And I said, 'We did already with the women's team,'" Williamson said, laughing. "You keep setting new bars and new expectations. The truth is we can arrive at a very high level. We have so much momentum. We have so much support.

"We're doing it in a different way and it's going to allow us to arrive to a very high level pretty quickly. But what I've always said from the beginning is we need to make sure that on that journey we don't leave the town behind. Because if we're successful as a football club, but the town hasn't grown with us, then we haven't actually had success.

"For us to be a successful football club in the Premier League, in the top levels of the Premier League, we also need to make sure that the town is successful."

For a day or two in New York, placing "Wrexham" and "Premier League", or even "Champions League", in the same sentence did not seem quite as preposterous as it once did. It may not have been Beatlemania, circa 1964, but this was one British export that, briefly at least, justifiably held top billing in one of the world's greatest markets.

United say £20m training kit sponsorship deal is biggest ever

Charlotte Duncker

Manchester United have agreed a £20 million training kit deal with the gambling firm Betway which they claim is the biggest in world football.

The multi-year sponsorship is said to be the biggest standalone training kit or playing shirt sleeve deal ever and club sources said it will help them to invest in the first team as they look to bolster the squad before their return to the Champions League.

United were without a training kit sponsor for the entirety of last season after their deal with the technology company Tezos expired at the end of the 2024-25 campaign. Sources claim they have been patiently waiting for the right partnership but the expiration of the last deal coincided with the club's worst league finish for more than 50 years.

Agreeing deals with betting companies for front-of-shirt sponsorship is no longer permitted, after Premier League clubs collectively agreed to withdraw them by the end of the 2025-26 season, but the rules do not extend to shirt sleeve sponsors or training kits.

The Betway logo will feature on the front of the men's and women's training kits and will be displayed prominently around Old Trafford. This is understood to be the biggest commercial investment for the UK-based gambling company, which was West Ham's front-of-shirt sponsor for a decade.

Michael Carrick is preparing for his first full campaign in charge at Old Trafford and needs more new faces for their return to European football.

Andrey Santos and Youri Tielemans have arrived from Chelsea and Aston Villa respectively for a combined £83 million, but with the departure of Casemiro and the knee injury suffered by Manuel Ugarte, whom the club had been open to selling, they are still considering bringing in another midfielder.

The left side is also an area they are looking to improve with either a left back or left winger, while another forward, to provide support for Benjamin Sesko, is also on the radar.

The squad, who had Bruno Fernandes, Matheus Cunha, Diogo Dalot and Noussair Mazraoui return this week after their post-World Cup breaks, are preparing for their fourth pre-season friendly. They opted against a far-flung tour this summer, instead scheduling a host of European-based friendlies. After defeat by Wrexham in their first match, they have beaten Rosenborg and Atletico Madrid. They play Paris Saint-Germain in Sweden on Saturday before games against Leeds United and AC Milan.

Staveley versus Kretinsky: Who will win battle in boardroom for West Ham?

As former Newcastle United investor vies with 'Czech Sphinx' to seize control, **Gary Jacob** looks at what the power struggle means for the Championship club's promotion hopes

For West Ham United, the next month promises to be one of the most crucial in their recent history. On the pitch, they are equipping themselves for their first season outside the top flight since 2011. Off it, a complex boardroom battle is playing out for control of the club.

David Sullivan's resignation as the co-chairman in June, following a Times and BBC Panorama investigation into sexual misconduct allegations, which he denies, has left a power vacuum at the top. Daniel Kretinsky, the Royal Mail owner dubbed the "Czech Sphinx" who has owned a minority stake since 2021, was in pole position to seize control.

That was until Amanda Staveley entered the fray. The former Newcastle United investor agreed last weekend to buy a 25.1 per cent stake from the late David Gold's family for £150 million — which values the club at about £600 million — and she could potentially gazump Kretinsky.

It will be fascinating to see which of the leading characters in West Ham's *Game of Thrones* are at the London Stadium on Saturday for the Carabao Cup first-round tie against Portsmouth.

There is certainly optimism among supporters that West Ham can bounce back quickly from relegation. They have sold more than 50,000 tickets for the cup tie and a similar number of season tickets for their Championship campaign, which begins away to Burnley eight days later.

Since Sullivan's resignation, Kretinsky has been running the club with the aim of an immediate return to the Premier League. Jarrod Bowen, the West Ham captain, opted to stay having listened to Kretinsky's vision for the club on a visit to Prague. The club have sold well, banking £160 million by offloading Crysencio Summerville, Mateus Fernandes and Freddie Potts. Further transfer fees could be generated by Aaron Wan-Bissaka, Jean-Clair Todibo, Niclas Füllkrug and Edson Álvarez.

So far, West Ham are yet to make a signing but the club have stressed that their transfer plans are unaffected by potential ownership changes. Nils Koppen was hired as director of player recruitment to move towards a more data-led approach, and the Celtic midfielder Arne Engels and the Sunderland winger Simon Adingra are among their targets.

West Ham's gamble is that by retaining most of last season's squad and making a good start, they should get their neck in front early. Most fans will care more about matters on the pitch, but those who want a change from Sullivan's stewardship are likely to get their wish — with the caveat that the 77-year-old may become kingmaker depending on how the parties play their cards.

Kretinsky, worth an estimated £8 billion according to The Sunday Times Rich List, is a methodical operator. He is the majority owner and the president of Sparta Prague in his native Czech Republic, but has largely taken a back seat at West Ham since buying a 27 per cent stake for about £168 million in 2021, leaving Sullivan to run the club.

Staveley has been looking to get back into football since leaving Newcastle United in July 2024. She was the public face of Newcastle's Saudi-backed takeover in 2021 and, with her husband, Mehrdad Ghodoussi, became a director and minority co-owner. Since leaving St James' Park, she has been linked with a bid for Tottenham Hotspur.

Staveley told Bloomberg this week: "Whatever club we take, there will be a big property play as well. We won't just do a football-led." That seems to be code for developing land in or near the Olympic Park in Stratford, east London.

In exchange for a land deal, her consortium would probably have to buy the London Stadium on a long lease. The stadium owner, in effect the mayor of London, would remain the freeholder. The mayor has said for years he would be open to discussing serious offers as the ground loses about £20 million each year, which London taxpayers cover. At present West Ham have a 99-year rental agreement from 2016, worth £4.4 million a year.

Staveley was hosted by London Stadium officials at a recent pop concert. It has been speculated that she may go further by building a new ground near the present site, which would appease supporters unhappy with the 2012 Olympic Stadium. That idea ignores the obsession with an Olympic legacy — never mind the vast cost. Available land near the stadium has been earmarked for development so it may be a case of now or never.

Staveley's consortium includes her husband, their firm, PCP Capital Partners, and Ashland Forest Capital Partners, a relatively new American private investment firm. It is unclear how they would fund any takeover and any development.

Before the recent allegations, a deal had been set up for Sullivan and Kretinsky to share ownership, each with the same holding of about 41 per cent. Kretinsky agreed to purchase shares owned by the Gold family to increase his stake. Sullivan would likewise raise his holding from 38.8 per cent. Gold's descendants agreed two prices depending on whether West Ham stayed up or not. They had been

David Sullivan

Sullivan, who owns 38.8 per cent, stepped down as co-chairman after allegations of sexual misconduct, which he denies. He bought the club with David Gold in 2010.

Daniel Kretinsky

Czech billionaire has reduced his stake to 24.8 per cent, which would allow him to buy Vanessa Gold's 25.1 per cent stake and not trigger a clause forcing him to make an offer for the rest of the club.

Amanda Staveley
Former Newcastle United investor has agreed a deal to buy Vanessa Gold's 25.1 per cent stake for £150 million. If she then bought out Sullivan she could take majority control of the club.

trying unsuccessfully to sell since David Gold's death in 2023, including to Americans and technology groups.

The proposed deal collapsed when Sullivan resigned. Kretinsky stepped in and agreed to buy 16 per cent from Gold's family, which would have taken his stake to 43 per cent. He became joint-chair alongside Vanessa Gold, David's daughter, who would have been left with 9.1 per cent.

Staveley was also approached about buying Gold's stake, perhaps with a view to gaining control. She agreed to buy the full stake for £150 million, which was more attractive because Gold's family could dispose of the full holding — and at a higher sum than had been agreed with Kretinsky. If Staveley then bought out Sullivan, she could take majority control of the club.

Kretinsky responded by selling more than 2 per cent to Jakub Havrlant, a Czech entrepreneur and investor. This means Kretinsky would not own more than 50 per cent if he buys Gold's full stock. Under a previous shareholder agreement in 2021, going above 50 per cent may trigger a clause that would force Kretinsky to buy Sullivan's stake at an inflated price. The process to buy the Gold shares could last two months.

Sullivan has lost control of the club but can still pull strings. He is open to selling his shares at a lofty price. It is hard to think that Sullivan, Kretinsky and Staveley could work together, should they all be left with chunky holdings. The question is, then, which two of the three could pair up for the betterment of the club? Perhaps Kretinsky could leave Staveley to run West Ham as one of his investments? Or do Kretinsky and Staveley want outright control?

The *Game of Thrones* finale left some disappointed. West Ham fans would settle for stability and a return to the top flight.

One billionaire may need help from another if plan is to work

CONTINUED FROM BACK

grounds that include integrity and honesty.

Sullivan resigned as West Ham co-chairman in June after the allegations were uncovered by a Times and BBC *Panorama* investigation.

The 77-year-old British businessman was accused of exploitative and predatory behaviour when he was making his fortune in the adult industry, with the claims dating back to the 1980s.

Sullivan denies the allegations and has labelled them "factually incorrect and entirely false".

For Kretinsky's plan to work, he may need the help of the club's third-largest shareholder, the American billionaire Albert "Tripp" Smith, who owns 8 per cent.

There are two rounds of bidding. In the first round, shareholders have 30 days to buy their entitlement, which is up to the same proportion as their present holding.

In the second round, any remaining Gold shares can be bought by shareholders who participated in the first round. Kretinsky hopes to take all of the 25.1 per cent on offer.

Without Kretinsky's move, Staveley's intervention would have meant Sullivan was kingmaker of the club's future ownership.

A seat at the table for Staveley would mean she could join forces with Sullivan or try to buy his 38.8 per cent share to take majority control of West Ham.

Bowen key for Nuno's side – but don't write off post-Spygate Saints

Joe Harston

Keeping hold of head coach Nuno Espírito Santo and captain Jarrod Bowen should give West Ham United fans confidence in their chances of bouncing back to the Premier League at the first attempt. They also still have the opportunity to reinvest the huge fees they brought in for Mateus Fernandes and Crysencio Summerville. But getting out of the Championship is never easy and these are the teams that look best placed to finish in the automatic promotion places.

GODFREY PITT/ACTION PLUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

The teenager Mané is expected to emerge as an important player for Wolves

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS

While the oddly timed pre-season sacking of Rob Edwards and the sit-in protest of Tolu Arokodare may have grabbed the headlines, there is no denying that Wolves have players who are among the best in the division.

For a start, they boast one of the Championship's strongest attacks in Adam Armstrong and Raúl Jiménez. Armstrong has proved effective at this level before, scoring the winning goal in the play-off final for Southampton in 2024. Jiménez's return to Molineux comes after a Premier League season with Fulham and a World Cup that showed he is still a dangerous force in the box.

In midfield is 18-year-old Mateus Mané, whose emergence last season was a rare positive in an otherwise dismal campaign. He is physical, comfortable on the ball, an excellent finisher, and could be a key player for the head coach César Peixoto.

Meanwhile, the combination of Kieran Trippier and Ladislav Krejci will be important in both boxes.

MIDDLESBROUGH

Despite the lacklustre Wembley performance that ended Middlesbrough's side of the Spygate drama, there has been plenty of evidence from Kim Hellberg's time on Teesside that they can challenge for the title.

Their main woe last season was struggling to take their chances, but they have addressed that by bringing in Will Lankshear from Tottenham Hotspur in a deal that could reach £20 million. The 21-year-old scored a respectable 11 goals for Oxford United last season and is a natural finisher with an aerial presence. He should be able to make the most of the creativity in this side.

The biggest concern is the departure of their midfield maestro and captain Hayden Hackney, who moved to Everton this summer. After he was injured in March, Middlesbrough won just twice in their next 11 matches. They hope that Sebastian Berhalter, a USA international, will be a suitable replacement. He is best known for his excellent set pieces, which bodes well because no one won more corners in the Championship than Middlesbrough last season. It is also handy that his midfield partner will be his close friend Aidan Morris, who he grew up with at Columbus Crew's academy.

Bowen's decision to stay is a boost for West Ham

SOUTHAMPTON

Spygate may not be quite in the rear-view mirror yet but the effect on the Southampton squad has not been the catastrophe many expected. Players have not headed for the exit in droves — in fact Southampton have signed two of last season's key loan players, Daniel Peretz and Cyle Larin, on permanent deals. They have also secured the sought-after goalscorer Lewis Dobbin from Aston Villa, after a standout season at Preston North End.

What does still hang over them from the Spygate saga is the fact that the FA is yet to make a decision on the head coach Tonda Eckert's involvement in the scandal, which may result in a ban from management.

Obviously, a forced change of head coach could scupper their chances but for the moment, they do not appear to be a side plagued by internal politics. Considering the turnaround Eckert performed after Will Still's disappointing spell in charge, a four-point deduction might well be forgotten after two games if the likes of Léo Scienza and Shea Charles find familiar form.

BURNLEY

The Lancashire side have developed a reputation for yo-yoing between the Championship and the Premier League, but, to their credit, they tend to find themselves in excellent shape before embarking on a promotion campaign. With the Belgian coach Nicky Hayen at the helm now, though, they are more difficult to read.

Hayen, 45, is an exciting manager who has had spells with Club Bruges and Genk but he will have to deal with a somewhat depleted squad, with the contributions of Maxime Estève and Jaidon Anthony particularly difficult to replace. Estève, the centre back who has moved to RB Leipzig, was a huge presence in their record-breaking defence when they were promoted under Scott Parker while conceding only 16 goals in the 2024-25 season.

Anthony was involved in more than a quarter of Burnley's league goals last season and that form earned him a move to Brentford.

Keeping hold of last year's player of the season Zian Flemming and their tenacious ball-winning midfielder Hannibal Mejbri will be crucial if they are to compete at the top again.

OTHER CONTENDERS

Millwall will be hoping to prove that last season's third-place finish was not a one-off, while Wrexham and Birmingham City look to make the most of the generous American investments they have received. Other dark horses are Norwich City who, after dropping into the relegation zone at the start of last season, enjoyed an impressive revival under Philippe Clement.

Wrexham take over New York, page 57

Sport

British trailblazer

Meet GB's first female sailor in America's Cup for 90 years

Page 52

Steve James

Why are we struggling to produce top cricket coaches?

Page 55

SKY SPORTS

Draper's return ends in tears

Jack Draper made his comeback from injury in Montreal but broke down in tears during a loss to Terence Atmane that leaves his US Open participation in doubt, page 52

Infantino's crisis summit

● Under-fire president calls Fifa staff to Morocco ● Wenger distances himself from World Cup plan

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

Gianni Infantino has called senior Fifa staff to a crisis meeting in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, where he is holed up, as Arsène Wenger piled the pressure on the beleaguered Fifa president.

Infantino has summoned staff to Rabat, sources say, in a desperate attempt to cling to power. His loyal lieutenants have been urging many of the 211 member associations to publicly back him.

Wenger's statement that the withdrawal of Infantino's World Cup sell-off plan was "absolutely necessary", and that he had been kept in the dark about the scheme, is seen as another disastrous development for the Fifa president.

It followed an email to staff from Fifa's secretary general, Mattias Grafstrom, who referred to "a sad and reproachable series of events" around the scheme.

Meanwhile, Prince Ali bin al-Hussein, president of the Jordan FA, alleged that the pressure on member associations to endorse Infantino for re-election next year "amounts to blackmail".

"We did not endorse him before and certainly will not now," Prince Ali posted on X. "But the whole situation amounts to blackmail and we refuse to

Continued on page 56

Kretinsky tries to block £150m West Ham deal

Gary Jacob

The ownership battle at West Ham United has intensified after the Czech billionaire and club co-chair Daniel Kretinsky moved to see off Amanda Staveley.

Staveley's consortium agreed a £150 million deal to buy the full 25.1 per cent stake from the family of the late David Gold on Saturday. But before Staveley can buy it, existing shareholders have first refusal at the price she agreed.

Kretinsky, the 51-year-old owner of Royal Mail, has responded by reducing his holding from 27 per cent to below 25 per cent, which enables him to buy the Gold family's full stake without surpassing 50 per cent.

Kretinsky must not exceed that level because it may trigger a clause, under a shareholders' agreement between them from 2021, which forces him to buy David Sullivan's 38.8 per cent stake at an inflated price.

Should Kretinsky's move pay off, his combined holding should put him in control of the club — which was relegated to the Championship last season — denying Staveley the chance to buy any shares.

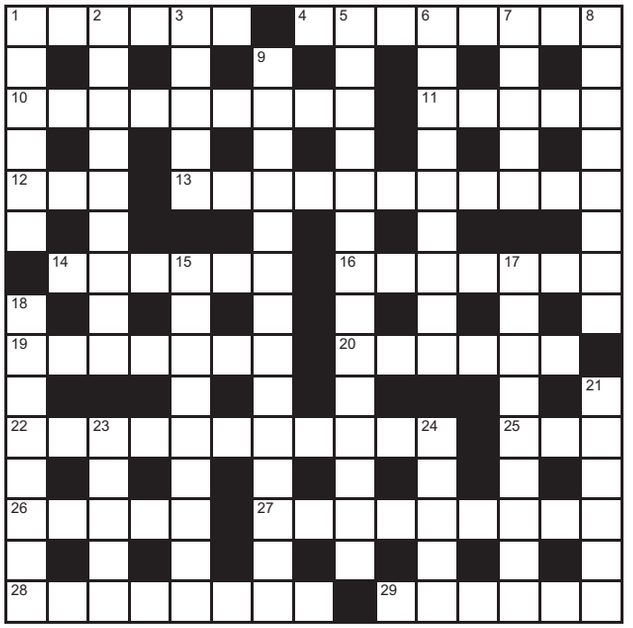
Staveley, 53, led the takeover of Newcastle United for Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

Kretinsky has agreed to sell more than 2 per cent to Jakub Havrlant, a Czech entrepreneur and investor. Kretinsky has gambled that he can buy all of the Gold family's holding — Vanessa Gold, David's daughter, is representing them — in the belief Sullivan will not be able to increase his stake as the Independent Football Regulator would step in because of the allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

The regulator, a new body, has the statutory power to make a club owner divest their shares should they be deemed unsuitable on

Continued on page 59

Times Crossword 29,613



ACROSS

1 Poet program occupies most of exhibit (6)
4 Dish made with eggs — some sell better without any shells (8)
10 Heroic tale of Ohio-born Liberal Democrat (5,4)
11 Seize westbound drug boat (5)
12 Life force found within Pinocchio (3)
13 Compare story-telling with cartoon bear leading and jumping cross-legged (5,6)
14 Combine core part of chimney and old fireplace (6)
16 Hunter — one regularly taking fewer traps (7)
19 Set fire to gas when there's no energy left for element (7)
20 Someone going through penance more quickly (6)
22 Five nudes jumping over tree backwards — it's a work of art (5,2,4)
25 Love intervening for and on behalf of father (3)
26 Muscle connector lacks density for part of joint (5)
27 Honour the German church incorporating new submissiveness (9)
28 Revised name or term accommodating latest in technology? (8)
29 Go through curved opening at 135 degrees (6)

DOWN

1 Buffeted small railway wagon (6)
2 Legal cases succeeded against local press agent (9)
3 It's perfect on top of yoghurt! (5)
5 Doctor claimed refurbished workspace next to river (7,7)
6 Call in large loan agreements, causing reputational damage (9)
7 Every now and again swim past rocky peak in trunks (5)
8 Invigorate Frenchman upset with non-uniform appearance (8)
9 Note lines accompanying lengthy word for part of the brain (4-4,6)
15 Laid songs out in series of notes (9)
17 Something that reveals palpebral muscle? (3-6)
18 Lift across the pond to reveal rocks (8)
21 Pretence regularly cloaked by quiet delivery (6)
23 Group performing without safety device? (5)
24 Bad egg turning green (5)

Yesterday's solution 29,612

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TIMES 2
August 5 | 2026

Should you wear flip-flops to the office?

This summer's thong rules

Topless sunbathing's out, mammary modesty is in. Let's call it progress

Carol Midgley

Fewer women may be choosing to go topless on Spanish beaches so join me, readers, in pondering why. It won't take long, as the saying goes. The reasons are as obvious as the nose on my face, which is not inconsiderable.

I have been saying for years that grilling one's nipples and breasts like two gammon steaks is as dated as a pair of 1970s crimplene trews, even though in my youth I used to do it myself. My gammons didn't thank me, especially when burning occurred and putting on a lacy bra felt like stabbing yourself with 10,000 needles. Then came the peeling and crusting stage, which left them looking like two barnacled hala fruits. Happy days.

The Times reported that Spanish newspapers and social media have been debating whether topless women are gradually disappearing from beaches. It seems to be so. One woman said that fewer women do it because they feel less safe and when others see more women covering up they are inclined to do it themselves. A YouGov survey last year found that 37 per cent of Spanish women often sunbathe topless. A similar survey in 2017 put that figure at 49 per cent, so quite a plunge.

I don't want to say I told you so but I started noticing about a decade ago that the only women whipping off their bikini tops on the beach were a) aged over 50 or b) had breast implants and didn't want to hide their pricey investments under a GG cup. Breast reduction and implant removal procedures have now surpassed enlargements.

It doesn't take a genius to work out that the decline has coincided with the ubiquitous presence of mobile phone cameras, which means that Mr P Ervert, lurking beneath a striped beach umbrella, can fill his photo bank all day long and, if he wishes, instantly share someone's blistered knockers with 20 mates back at the pub in Sutton Coldfield (or wherever — I'm not besmirching Sutton Coldfield).

Ironic, really, that the oversharing of life generally has led to an outbreak of mammary modesty. But I'd say it's a bit more complicated than that. Let's not forget our old friend "impossible

beauty standards". Did you know that big breasts are now passé, old hat, toast? Oh yes. This year it was declared that the fashionable mammary to wear out and about is a pert, petite "ballerina boob", the better to pull off "Le Droop", namely the small, braless, unsupported breasts that look natural with just the right amount of "hang".

This is a nightmare trend for the larger-chested woman, who is more likely to be sporting "Le Grand Flop". She's not going to brandish her two slumped sacks of damp flour on the Costa Blanca any time soon.

Anyway, I think young women today are just more sensible than we used to be. They drink less, they don't hitchhike as we used to to save money and then, when we got a lift from a stranger, failed to put on the seatbelt. They wear factor 50 and definitely don't baste their breasts in baby oil and, as one acquaintance did, Spry Crisp 'n Dry, effectively shallow-frying one's clangers for an all-over tan that lasted two days, tops. It doesn't half accelerate leathery wrinkling, hence the teen boys taunting us that we would have "corduroy tits". Ah, the good old days.

So think of this as progress and a welcome development in a phone-dominated world. Voyeurs have always existed, obviously, but at least in our day they didn't go home from the beach sweatily clutching a full personal library of digital "souvenirs".

A word in your shell-like, Avanti

Did you hear about the tortoise found on the railway tracks of the west coast mainline? It's annoying when the gags write themselves.

The tortoise was spotted ambling down the tracks by a passenger at Runcorn. I could ask whether it was overtaking the trains at the time, but I won't. Nor will I ask whether Avanti had employed it as a pace-setter. It probably fell off the train in shock upon being told the price of a peak-time ticket to London.

I do applaud Avanti and Network Rail, though, for stopping the trains to rescue the poor creature and not thinking, hmm, this might cause Delay Repay refunds — just crush it. But the terrible attempts at corporate punning? Not so much.

Its press release called the tortoise a "slowcomotive" and said it was taken to a "place of shell-ter". Painful. It added there was "shell shock in our control room" but after ten minutes passengers could "hare it to their destinations". Guys, guys — never give up the day job.

My guide to shear underwear

Good news. I haven't bought any of Marks & Spencer's crotchless knickers, which will be a relief all round, I'm sure. But that's not my reason for failing to "treat" myself.

M&S is, FYI, stocking Ann Summers's gusset-free lacy pants, which it describes as "playful" but I would describe as "pointless". Some claim they are healthy to wear because they air the pantry, so to speak. So can we expect to see a range of crotchless Y-fronts? I suspect not, and let's be thankful for that. I now have a horrific mental image that I'd describe as not so much "playful" as "call the police".

But a pack of three lace crotchless thongs costs £20, a mystery given only a wisp of material is involved. And yet a pack of three lacy thongs *with* gussets costs half that.

If you must feel a draught down below, why not save yourself a tenner, buy the cheap ones and get to work with the garden shears?

A Cambridge

A victim of 'dark arts' or a plagiarist? Jason Arday is at the heart of a storm that threatens his reputation and the institution's. By Damian Whitworth

The ancient limestone colleges of the University of Cambridge have stood for centuries, but occasionally even they succumb to external pressures. The first stone appears to have crumbled in the wall of support for the embattled Cambridge professor at the heart of the extraordinary plagiarism row that has engulfed the university.

Cambridge moved fast when allegations of plagiarism were levelled last week at Jason Arday, who became the university's youngest black professor when he was appointed in 2023 at the age of 37. The allegations were unfounded and part of "a vile campaign to undermine his credibility", the university said in a statement. The allegations focus on his PhD, awarded by Liverpool John Moores University, which cleared him of plagiarism charges.

Among those who, separately, signed an open letter in support of Arday was Professor Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu, a nanoscientist and the head of Wolfson College. The letter, circulated by the Good Law Project, said Arday was being smeared with "fake accusations", and was signed by other heads of colleges and many other figures from academia and politics, including Zack Polanski, the Green Party leader. However, over the weekend Uchegbu's name disappeared from the letter online.

The almost daily revelations about the academic record of Arday and disclosures about many claims he has made in other areas of his life have caused disquiet among some other academics, even during the university vacation. One Cambridge professor says by this year the allegations were well known by many professors and "the university has questions to answer regarding the dismissal of allegations.

"The matter is doing enormous damage to public confidence in the universities. It is doing enormous damage to the prestige of Cambridge. It is doing enormous damage to the credibility of sociology. It is doing enormous damage to the perception of black scholarship. So there does need to be an independent inquiry into the matter, preferably by the Office for Students."

When Arday was appointed as professor of sociology of education the university presumably thought it had found someone all too rare: an academic outsider who could bring to the hallowed halls a fresh and invigorating intellect and new thinking. Unfortunately some of that thinking has been alleged not to be new at all but plagiarised from another academic. And numerous other elements of his life appear to have been exaggerated.

As journalists have pulled at threads of his life in recent days more and more of them have come loose, raising questions about what other parts of his story may start to unravel.

His memoir, *Great and Unfortunate Things*, is due to be published this month. Serialisation in another national newspaper is understood to be on hold.

He has claimed that he is not a liar and that while he made mistakes he has also been the victim of a campaign to discredit him since he arrived at the university.

As the life stories of academics go, Arday's is undoubtedly extraordinary. The son of Ghanaian-born parents, he was raised in south London. Aged three he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and was non-verbal until the age of 11 and could not read or write until his late teenage years. He left school with two GCSEs, in PE and textiles.

Nevertheless, he eventually enrolled in a BTEC course before studying for a degree in PE and teaching, followed by two master's degrees, then a PhD from Liverpool John Moores University. This opened the door to posts at a series of universities before Cambridge, where he specialises in race and higher education. But it is the PhD that is at the heart of the controversy.

Nathan Cofnas, a former researcher at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who is now based at Ghent University in Belgium, made the allegations of plagiarism in a blog post. Cofnas identified significant parts of Arday's PhD thesis that he alleges appeared to

> "There has been a co-ordinated campaign to unseat me

have been copied from another researcher, Paula Zwozdiak-Myers, who wrote a PhD thesis on the same topic several years earlier.

The source of the initial claims has led Arday's supporters to claim that this is all an unpleasant campaign against him — Cofnas once claimed that in a meritocracy black people would be famous only for "sports and entertainment". However, other academics have called for an investigation into Arday's work. The Times was also able to highlight similarities between some passages of his 2015 thesis on peer-mentoring among student teachers and the work of Zwozdiak-Myers of Brunel University.

If there is an investigation it wouldn't be the first. Complaints of

professor's brutal unravelling

JOSHUA BRATT FOR THE TIMES

Nathan Cofnas. Top: Jason Arday

plagiarism were received at Liverpool John Moores University last year, and after an investigation Arday was cleared. Arday did not dispute the specific allegations of plagiarism but asked that the political context of a "war on critical race theory" and the weaponisation of plagiarism allegations against black researchers be considered.

He said he received only one formal recorded supervision session in the two and a half years he worked on his PhD. The university's handbook for doctoral students says that all PhD students should have a "minimum of two supervisors". It says: "We do expect that you will meet with your supervisors once a month on average."

There are serious questions about the quality control of the doctoral programme at Liverpool John Moores University, a Cambridge professor says. "If Arday's claims are true that he only received one face-to-face supervision, that is shocking. Most PhD students see their supervisors once a week or once a fortnight."

In an interview with The Times last weekend Arday said: "I am accountable for the mistakes. I hold myself accountable and other people should hold me accountable."

He added: "We're talking about academia here. I didn't murder somebody." This argument probably wouldn't survive contact with some of his PhD students, who would surely obliterate it, especially if they have sweated blood to dot every "i" in every citation in their own work.

"I think the cruelty that I've experienced and the positioning of me as this kind of liar and fantasist is totally unacceptable," he added, and said he had been subjected to a "dark arts" campaign since arriving at Cambridge, becoming a "lightning rod" for criticism of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. "There has been, since I arrived at Cambridge, a very well-orchestrated and co-ordinated campaign to unseat me from my position."

In an interview with The Guardian Arday said that attempts to intimidate him had included a pig's head being sent to his parents' home. He said that local police had spoken to a butcher who recalled selling a whole pig on the day in question. However, the Metropolitan Police could find no record of any allegation.

All these claims about the context of his academic life have not deterred those who are still deeply uneasy about the possibility that all his facts may not be sacred.

Professor Colin Mills, head of the University of Oxford's sociology department, wrote on X: "I do not want the reputation of my discipline, my department, my hardworking and intellectually honest colleagues, or myself smeared by indirect association with academic fraud, low academic standards and clownish statements from people in positions of authority who should know better."

John Preston, an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Essex,

> "Jason's taken everything that's happened very, very hard

has said "there is, in my judgment, a case to answer here". Even The Guardian reported that academics it spoke to said the scrutiny Arday had received was "fair for someone at Cambridge" in a prestigious academic position.

The University of Cambridge has previously said that allegations of plagiarism regarding the thesis and journal publications have been thoroughly investigated by the relevant institution and the journals in question. "Professor Arday has been cleared by those investigations of any wrongdoing."

Liverpool John Moores University said in 2025 it received allegations of academic misconduct against Arday. "A confidential procedure was conducted in response to those allegations and Professor Arday's PhD still stands. We will not comment further on a private matter between the university and a former student."

Arday has also faced questions about his claims of near-superhuman achievements in running events, but stood by his assertion that he ran 30 marathons in 35 days, 300 miles in three days on the treadmill and 600 miles in 12 days.

He has said he has raised up to £5.5 million for charity and told The Times: "I can't make people believe me. Nobody lives their life having a receipt for every single thing they say or they've done." He did not raise all the money for charity, he explained, but was part of a syndicate of about 100 people, yet when he spoke at events or to the press the coverage focused on him.

The charity WaterAid cast doubt on claims Arday had made about "installing water points" in South America and west Africa, saying that it never sent volunteers abroad. On Tuesday it emerged that his claim on the Cambridge Faculty of Education webpage that he was a visiting professor in the University of Glasgow's School of Education was not true, although he was a professor of sociology in the school in 2021.

He raised eyebrows over his recollection of taking part in what he described as *Seven Up*. A friend later clarified that he was not part of the famous long-term television programme but an informal network of black mothers that shared a name with the series that began in 1964.

One friend at Cambridge, who has known Arday for years and speaks to him regularly, mounts a robust defence of him. "I acknowledge that some academics have looked at the textual analysis and decided that there is a case to answer, but the awarding university looked into this in detail.

"They've done a proper investigation, probably looked at it much more closely than those commentating academics and found that there was no plagiarism. I think that point has been rather underplayed by Jason's critics."

The friend says that other plagiarism cases have not been treated in the same way. "There has been press coverage about some of them to a greater or lesser extent. But they've all stuck by the arguments around plagiarism.

"Whereas in Jason's case it's gone off in multiple different directions. It looks to me like a character assassination. And it's just absolutely devastating. There's been an undertone of him effectively being portrayed as a fantasist, which definitely doesn't accord with the experience of those who know him, who actually see him like I do: as somebody who's very level-headed, not partial to making outlandish claims.

"So while I can't defend point by point all of the different allegations that have been made against him, it really does lead me and some of his friends to ask questions in that regard."

This friend is not aware of the claims Arday has made about harassment he has received in Cambridge. "Jason is not somebody that goes around broadcasting any troubles and travails which he's undergoing. Even people who are closer to him than me have been hearing some stuff that he's been going through for the first time recently.

"I think what we need to understand about Jason is that, first of all, there's a real person underneath this. I know that you wouldn't necessarily know it from some of the mocking that's actually taken place in the media, but he's actually a very sensitive person. And he's somebody with learning disabilities, which he's completely acknowledged, which he's strived very, very hard to overcome but nevertheless, continues to battle every day.

"He's taken everything that's happened very, very hard, and his friends have been battling to keep his spirits up, because clearly his reputation, everything he's worked so hard towards every day for years, has just effectively been shredded. And now we've just got to pick up the pieces."

fashion

I'm a flip-flop convert in the

Thongs to work? I'm sold, says Anna Murphy

COVER AND BELOW: GETTY IMAGES; EROTEME

From left: street style in Munich; the model Izabel Goulart; Hailey Bieber; Jonathan Bailey. Below right: Jude Law

To flip-flop or not to flip-flop, that is the question. By which I am not referring to the wearing of flip-flops generally but in a work context. I have a colleague who is not only competent and stylish but also — and this is relevant — powerful and is wearing them to the office most days. And not the kind of upscale retools that are rendered in leather and have kitten heels but common-or-garden Havaianas.

She is not the only one. The other day I met a fashion industry executive at a smart Mayfair restaurant and she was wearing Havaianas too, styled with a shirred bustier dress, a blazer, a Louis Vuitton handbag and lashings of Van Cleef & Arpels. Both women were, incidentally, wearing black iterations. This seems to be key.

> **The secret is that the rest of your outfit looks polished**

Who could have seen this coming? Or indeed heard it coming? That flip-flop sound that gave the genre its name, that once signalled beach life, has become the soundtrack to office life too. Remember those innocent days when we used to debate shorts in the workplace? Forget getting your knees out, will anyone ever take you seriously again if you get your feet out? And if you can be heard flip-flopping your way from a mile off?

Are there even bigger issues at stake? I know Andy Burnham has other things on his plate, yet given his concerns about national productivity, should he be worrying about the rise of the flip-flop? Are we looking at one of those moments when what appears to be a purely sartorial question becomes almost existential? During the Second World War, when British women adopted trouser-wearing like never before, newspapers would debate whether "slacks" would turn them slack. Will wearing flip-flops to work turn us into a nation of flops?

A couple of years ago I would have said yes. Now I don't think so. I would argue that the Overton Window around wearing them in the workplace is shifting. The secret is that the rest of your outfit looks polished and that your feet don't look like armadillos. Which also means that — and I am sorry to have to say this, because I am all about equal opportunities in theory — you are probably not a man. Film stars such as Jonathan Bailey and Jude Law, who are both urban flip-floppers, are, I fear, very much the exception to the rule.

It's not often that we witness a genuine sartorial shift, one that isn't just about fashion but is a sociocultural moment. Those slacks-wearing women in the 1940s were one. The embrace of jeans, originally designed for poor working men, a decade or two after that by men and women of all classes was another. Both these shifts had a symbolism to them but were also fuelled by practicality. This summer's shift has been an almost entirely practical one, promoted by the unprecedented temperatures that can make even sandals feel like snow boots.

But it could also be seen as part of the Californication — and no, I am not talking about the TV series — of the modern world. After all, who is the patron saint of the flip-flop? Jennifer Aniston, a California girl through and through. And who reinvented them as a luxury purchase in leather seven years ago? Two Los Angeles natives, the Olsen twins, by way of their label The Row. (Its City leather thong will set you back £870 but that doesn't stop them being nigh-on sold out; therow.com.)

Zoë Kravitz (who was born in LA) and Hailey Bieber (who lives there) are another couple of stars who are devotees of what Americans prefer to call thong sandals. Kravitz, who favours flats, has gone as far as to wear hers with a suit. Bieber likes to wear her £400 kitten-heel iteration from Toteme with Capri pants (farfetch.com).

A pair of the classic Havaianas Top will set you back a rather less challenging £23 (havaianas.com). The women I know who are wearing them to the office all say a version of the same thing. That they started off putting them on for the commute in, with some shoes to change into in their bag, then they stopped changing into them.

Conjured up in Brazil in 1962, Havaianas were inspired by Hawaiian-made rubber originals from the 1930s, which had in turn been inspired by the traditional *zori* worn by Japanese immigrants to the island. The brand name is the feminine form of the Portuguese word for "Hawaiians".

office...

£35, archiesfootwear.co.uk

Five to buy now

£23, havaianas-store.com

£60, fitflop.com

£89, dunelondon.com

£170, alohas.com

They were initially worn only by poorer people in Brazil, but are now a global and classless phenomenon. More than 200 million pairs are sold each year. It's another version of that same hierarchy-busting topsy-turviness that happened with denim. Indeed, that's part of their appeal in this faux-egalitarian epoch of ours.

I happen to think Havaianas are the most comfortable flip-flops, and so easy to walk in, but if you need more arch support, you can try Archies (£35, archiesfootwear.co.uk) or FitFlop (the leather Gracie, with its very slight heel, is £49, reduced from £75, fitflop.com). I also like Ancient Greek Sandals' jelly and leather styles (£95 and £145 respectively, ancient-greek-sandals.com).

... and I'm not

'Flip-flops should only be worn on the beach'

By Hilary Rose

Isabel Marant x Havaianas, £120, isabelmarant.com

I do not say this lightly, because I defer to Jennifer Aniston in most respects, but just because she wears flip-flops all the time doesn't make it right. Just because Zoë Kravitz and Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber stroll from private jet to chauffeured car in flip-flops doesn't make it right, or indeed viable, for the rest of us. Until a couple of years ago, you packed flip-flops for your beach holiday, then put them back in the cupboard when you got back, and that is exactly as it should be.

Then they started to seep out during working hours, and in the city, like a bad smell. This year they're everywhere, on everyone, all the time. According to Vogue, they're a comfortable, versatile, warm-weather essential, which just goes to show what they know. According to me, they're yuck. As the Spice Girls once said: stop right now, thank you very much.

The key point is that flip-flops should be worn on the beach and only on the beach. It makes no difference that it's now as hot at home as it is on holiday, not least because cities are filthy. You wouldn't walk down the high street wearing a bikini and a sarong, or at least I hope you wouldn't, so why the holiday flip-flops? Don't you want a proper sole between you and the pavement, or the floor of the train or the bus? Why not?

Also, if you're busy running about your everyday business, as opposed to admiring the view from your balcony, flip-flops are a hindrance. If it starts raining, they're downright dangerous. They're not an efficient thing to put on your feet. The clue is in the name: they flip and flop, and make a sloppy noise, and wreak havoc with your arches and your joints and your back, because they offer zero support. Mostly, though, feet are functional, not designed to be shown off.

In defence of Aniston, Jenner et al, they are at least exposing pretty, pedicured feet, but you, with your cracked heels and disgusting fungal infections? Put them away. It's unhygienic. As for the men in flip-flops, specifically the man whose dirty, hairy, repellent feet I had no choice but to look down at this morning on a rush-hour Tube, if you can't put them away, consider sending them back for a replacement. What upsets me most, though, is the deception. There are flip-flops with high heels and kitten heels and wedges and platforms, but a flip-flop with a wedge is still a flip-flop, not a shoe. It's just a flip-flop on tiptoe. A flip-flop with a kitten heel is silly and a flip-flop with a high heel is an abomination.

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley wears her flatform flip-flops with white jeans and looks lovely. Jenner wears her stilettos with black Capri pants and looks lovely, ditto Kravitz, who's been stalking round New York wearing flip-flops and grungy loose trousers. But they would all look so much lovelier in something else: a ballet flat, a soft suede loafer, a slingback, an airy, summery open-toe Manolo Blahnik slide of exquisite loveliness.

I can't imagine how uncomfortable Kendall's high-heel flip-flops must be, but I'd point out again that she is going from private jet to taxi. Aniston, too, is invariably departing a yoga class, or a facial, or a yacht. We note also, in passing, that Nicola Peltz Beckham is in the south of France styling her nude stilettos with a gold ankle bracelet and a new tattoo, and if that is a look you aspire to emulate, off you go. As far as I'm concerned, the only acceptable place and time to wear flip-flops at home is when you're leaving the nail bar, having just had a pedicure. Any other time, put some shoes on. Your joints will thank you for it. So will I.

Hannah Waddingham

£148, thereformation.com

Olivia Palermo

£85, cos.com

Look sharp! Pencil skirts are back

£59, johnlewis.com

By Charlie Gowans-Eglinton

Is the midi skirt over? As the high street shifts the last of the sales to the back to make space for next season's trends, there's a surprising new wardrobe update: the pencil skirt.

Which at first glance seems ill-fitted, perhaps literally, to our lives now. Too tight, too short, too incapacitating. As we adapted to flexi-working and relaxed office dress codes, and as we supersized what tailoring we *did* wear, the pencil skirt quickly went the way of the pencil.

Unless you were particularly attached, you mightn't have missed them, not when instead we had the knife-pleat midi, the tiered cotton midaxi, the linen maxi. Suddenly we had space for big lunches and the ability to stride, plus the fashionable bits of volume, ruffles, movement. How could the pencil compete? Even its knee length felt off as mid-calf became the norm, especially since that longer midi length looked so much better with the trainers we were suddenly wearing with everything.

I was glad to see the back of them, having never recovered from my mid-grey pencil school skirt — so only something really fab would tempt me back. Which it has: the pencil 2.0 is less corporate, less stiff and a lot less boring. The shape is smart but not overly conservative, thanks to fluid fabrics, sexy leathers, bright colours and metallics, embellishment and statement animal prints, abstracts and florals.

Even the length feels fresh: it should finish *on* the knee or just below, definitely not above, and not straying into midi lengths. After years of street-sweeping hems (and picking them up to navigate stairs and escalators safely), knee length feels effortless, as well as looking modern.

In Paris last month the fashion contingent proved its versatility. Vogue Australia's Christine Centenera wore a bold abstract print skirt in red, white and black with a plain black vest and a pair of pointed-toe snakeprint stilettos; American Elle's Nina Garcia wore a chain-trimmed black pencil skirt with a monochrome striped T-shirt and red-toed heels.

It used to be that French magazine editors all wore jeans to underline their irreverence, but instead the former French Vogue editor Carine Roitfeld paired her gold pencil skirt and kitten heels with a Sex Pistols tee. Elsewhere, Emily Blunt wore a high-shine patent black pencil skirt with matching heels and a high-contrast red cardigan, and Hannah Waddingham took colour-scheme cues from her red and white checked skirt, adding white stilettos and a red quilted Chanel bag.

Yes, they were all wearing heels — but then they were walking red carpets or congregating in Paris for haute couture fashion week. For less high-stakes dress codes (which is all of them) even a low and still very walkable heel will look great, and you can also wear your pencil with flats. Look for an open-toed sandal or a pointed-toe flat (as opposed to a round toe) that will elongate the leg. Definitely no trainers, because that look will for ever read as a City type on her commute.

In this weather, lighter fabrics with less structure appeal. Reformation's Helen skirt is pure silk, so a far cry from a rigid, hobbling pencil. It comes in tiger print, floral sequinned yellow or lilac, and a beautiful deep orange (from £218, thereformation.com).

Wear similar tones up top for a smarter look, or clash your colours and prints. Cos's black-checked pistachio green cotton-mix (£95, cos.com) is on the longer side, so particularly good if you're tall, and would look great with a stripe up top. Damson Madder's brown viscose has a subtle ruffle over one hip for a bit more movement (£70, damson

GETTY IMAGES

Emily Blunt

madder.com), and the red polka dots mean that a red top would work particularly well.

For high-impact colour and print, John Lewis's bright red with monochrome flowers will do the heavy lifting in any outfit (£59, johnlewis.com). Once the weather turns and that September feeling makes you want to throw your summer dresses out of the window, a bit more rigour may appeal. Baukjen's Carmen stretch leather skirt in an oxblood colour (£299, baukjen. com), or Mango's brown mock croc (was £45.99, now £25.99, mango.com), would give the desired vintage wiggle without straying into vintage sexy secretary territory.

You can wear your pencil to the office, of course — add a white or pale blue shirt — but the newest versions are too good to save for that office. Zoë Kravitz's gold lace Saint Laurent skirt, worn with a cardigan, stilettos and a clutch bag, introduces the pencil skirt as cocktail attire. The Saint Laurent is £2,365, though, so try Essentiel Antwerp's rhinestone-embellished checked tulle, or the green and black sequin (£260 each, essentiel-antwerp.com).

Any one of these will put a new-season spin on the rest of your wardrobe, which is what I always crave as September approaches — that back-to-school feeling, but a very different pencil skirt from the regulation one that I remember.

£299, baukjen.com

Meghan is 45 — and it's a big disappointment...

She thanked her followers for 'birthday love' — but who will have swum in later to get the sunglasses? By Shane Watson

MEGHAN, DUCHESS OF SUSSEX/INSTAGRAM

The Duchess of Sussex's birthday photos on Instagram

It's Meghan's 45th birthday, and this is the sort of occasion we have come to expect will deliver extraordinary outpourings on social media. It's the one time of the year when you can guarantee a mega-dump of personal pictures on Instagram and maybe video footage of the birthday celebrity blowing out candles or dancing in the kitchen with a dressed up dog, or snuggled up with one of those very big glasses of wine on a sundeck somewhere with an ocean view. Birthdays are, in celebrity world, as we all know well, a special opportunity for some carefully curated self-publicity, and the Duchess of Sussex, as we are also well aware, is in the super-league as far as self promotion goes. So it's fair to say that Meghan's birthday Instagram reveal — two black-and-white pictures, posted with a caption thanking fans for their "birthday love" — has been a medium to huge disappointment.

It's possible this is just a teaser and somewhere someone is working through the night putting together a little montage of images with a soundtrack — *Sweets for My Sweet*? *Uptown Girl*? — but so far this is all we have to go on, and they're not even close-ups. The first is of Meghan leaping into a swimming pool wearing a high-cut black (we assume, could be dark navy or brown) swimming costume, brandishing a load of balloons, some of them bearing the message "happy birthday". The second is of the after-splash, with nothing to see but plumes of water (probably the idea was that Meghan should be smiling and dripping, head thrown back, arms raised, but for that you need the pool floor to push up off, and that doesn't work so well from the jumping-in point of view. Just guessing).

Anyway. At least someone is thinking about these things, because honestly, talk about a wasted opportunity. If these were spontaneous pictures of Meghan larking about at a pool party then fine, but of course this is a set-up pair of pictures that have been discussed, planned, planned some more, executed, checked and double-checked and finally posted. Meghan will have chosen between four or five costumes for the pool jump, wrestled over whether or not to wear the sunglasses (on the pro side, *with* sunglasses looks more spontaneous and fun times. Jumping into a pool wearing sunglasses, notwithstanding that we've all done it, forgetting we had them on, feels more of a Harry thing to do. We're not buying that Meghan would forget to take them off so it feels even less authentic).

The point is, trouble has been taken over this slim pickings of a birthday Insta drop, so why not go the usual Sussex route and do mega-schmaltz plus branding: have a picture of the birthday girl drifting around her kitchen garden barefoot wearing shorts and a white shirt, with Archie and Lili clinging to her, one on each hip (backs to camera, naturally)? At least then you'd have As Ever vibes, a potential percentage of sales of the white shirt and shorts, and maybe that good straw hat she was wearing in the homeware shop in Portugal (last drop from their European holidays). Or why not have a picture of her and Harry nuzzling nose-to-nose over a piece of cake (on brand, especially if the flower sprinkles are visible and the glass is As Ever rosé)? Or what about her and the rescue dog/dogs and the kids (yes, back views!) gazing up at the happy birthday Mommy posters they made in class?

> **"It was not the usual Sussex route of mega-schmaltz**

The possibilities are virtually endless — this is a glaringly obvious opportunity to get in some product placement or at least some connected friends (how about a video of Meghan receiving a surprise message from the whole cast and crew of *MasterChef Australia* plus the Australian actress Nicole Kidman?).

It's just so very disappointing. When it's clear someone is hellbent on securing her place in lifestyle history, and everything the Sussexes do is done with maximum profit foremost in their minds, this seems like a dropped ball you cannot fathom given they live in California and do this for a living. It makes you wonder if there's something else bigger afoot. Do hope so.

arts

MARYLENE MEY

My opera about the opioid crisis

The composer Missy Mazzoli lost two cousins to addiction. Now they have inspired a new work, she tells Neil Fisher

It is one of the deadliest public health disasters in modern American history. Hundreds of thousands of people have died as a result of the opioid epidemic, which began with prescription painkillers — most notoriously OxyContin — before spreading to heroin and illicit fentanyl.

For the composer Missy Mazzoli, two of those victims are not just statistics — they were her cousins. Mazzoli, 45, is one of the most celebrated American composers today, with a string of successful works to her name, particularly in opera. The hit rate in that tricksiest of forms is low, but Mazzoli has had remarkable success. *Breaking the Waves*, her grungy, disturbing adaptation of the Lars von Trier film that starred Emily Watson, has been seen around the world and is being mounted by English National Opera in February next year. This October, she will premiere *Lincoln in the Bardo* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, an adaptation of the Booker prizewinning novel by George Saunders.

Her next opera, though, will be much more personal. *The Galloping Cure*, having its world premiere this month at the Edinburgh International Festival directed by Tom Morris, is inspired by the opioid epidemic and some of its chief players: the Sackler family, owners of Purdue Pharma, the company that supplied OxyContin. "It's about addiction, the dark interplay between pharmaceuticals, doctors and capitalism," says Mazzoli, speaking from New York.

Mazzoli explains what happened to her 25-year-old cousins who grew up, like her, in small-town Pennsylvania. One had been in "a minor car crash, was prescribed OxyContin for the pain, took too much and died". The other "became addicted to OxyContin after it was prescribed for a minor injury, again, and then very quickly moved to heroin. She went to rehab, came back from rehab, overdosed and died the next day."

Naively, I had assumed that the OxyContin disaster had mostly hit those on the fringes of society. "That's not the case," Mazzoli replies. "I think that was part of the push by the pharmaceutical industry to malign people who were addicted. They would say, 'Oh, it's not the drug that's addictive, it's people with addictive personalities — like, if you're programmed to be an addict, that's *your* problem. And that stigma has continued, when in reality, thinking about the Sackler family, they had people, they had secretaries working for them who were addicted to OxyContin and who lost their jobs. So they had people literally in the building where they're peddling this supposedly non-addictive drug, falling prey to addiction. It was everywhere."

The victims also included a mutual friend of Mazzoli and her regular librettist Royce Vavrek. "He was a professional musician, a performer, this sort of nerdy guy in a band who became addicted to OxyContin, then became addicted to heroin, overdosed and died."

It has taken eight years for Mazzoli and Vavrek to come up with the right material for an opera inspired by this tragedy. "It was a very positive channelling of my anger, my frustration and the sort of helplessness that I felt in watching how my aunts and uncles who had lost their children had to suffer on... it was something very real and visceral for us, but we couldn't figure out a way to put it into an opera without sounding preachy or simplistic."

With the help of a treatment by the writer Karen Russell, and some influences from Franz Kafka's story *A Country Doctor*, they arrived at something less literal — what Mazzoli calls "a dark fairytale". In *The Galloping Cure* a stranger comes into town peddling a cure for pain in the form of a carousel. "And for a while everything is fine," Mazzoli explains. "But then he starts marketing home [carousel] 'horses'. You get all the same effects as the carousel, but you can do it alone at home. Then things take a dark turn when people realise they can't pay for it any more." The stranger's price is sinister in the extreme — he takes body parts, first the hair, then the knees, then the eyes and tongue. "Then you realise he's using these body parts to erect the carousel in the next town — so it's the cyclical nature of addiction, of the destruction wrought by the opioid crisis. And it just keeps feeding itself."

The Galloping Cure by Missy Mazzoli, top

A musical motif seeped in very quickly — the day after the commission. "I started to listen to carousel music in Paris, where we were doing *Breaking the Waves*. And it's really creepy if you try to sit in one place and just listen to this kind of Doppler effect of sound going around — it's very trippy, very strange. So I did try to recreate that. There's a sort of careening, simplistic motif that tears through the orchestra and cycles around in a very menacing way. And this very creepy kind of kids' tune becomes more like a psychotic dance."

In March the opera's co-producer John Berry was reported in The Times as saying that opera needed to tell different stories "to own the zeitgeist". He suggested that writers on Netflix series such as *Adolescence* needed to be attracted to the art form."I don't think every opera needs to be ripped from the headlines," Mazzoli says. "The work I create is usually trying to tap into something to provoke conversation, to give a new perspective on things we're obsessed with now. But there is room for all of it.

"It's very, very hard when there are opera companies with seasons where they might have only three operas, and then it's tempting to say, 'Well, you should be spending your resources on preserving *La bohème*, or creating an opera about Trump.'" If there is only one new work a year, "we put a false pressure on those composers and those pieces".

There will also be considerable pressure for *Lincoln in the Bardo* to fly. But Mazzoli came to the commission with her eyes open. "[At the Met] you have to fill 4,000 seats a night. So you need something with name recognition. That is really hard. So there is the name recognition of Abraham Lincoln *and* people love the novel."

When Mazzoli contacted Saunders, "He replied: 'I'm so glad you wrote [to me] because when I wrote this novel I actually imagined it as an opera.'" The composer embraces the surrealism of Saunders's scenario, which imagines the grieving Lincoln visiting his dead son Willie in a purgatorial afterlife populated by ghosts. "Ninety-nine per cent of the people in the book, and the opera, are dead — and that gives me tremendous freedom musically."

Mazzoli did not grow up in a musical family. Her first artistic passion was the riot grrrl movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s — "a subset of punk, often all-female groups, who were vocally feminist and very vocally political, and for 14-year-old me it was like discovering this glorious planet of people". *The Galloping Cure* has an orchestra but the score also takes in rave beats — Mazzoli has worked with two electronic music producers. Organs and synthesizers will be part of the soundscape in *Lincoln in the Bardo*.

Mazzoli's love of opera came after punk. "I grew up with a lot of MTV. I loved that, and I loved the idea that music could drive a story," she says. "As a living composer, it's really helpful for me to stand in front of people and say, 'Yeah, I grew up in a small town, driving around, listening to punk music, just like half of you.' I'm not interested in making it more complicated... For me music is my way of understanding the world, and I think it can be that for other people."

The Galloping Cure has allowed Mazzoli to try to understand the tragedy that befell her family — and so many others. The fallout has not led to anything like justice, she says. The Sackler family is understood to have paid more than $6 billion in compensation but it is "like a drop in the bucket".

The legacy of the epidemic remains. Mazzoli thinks of her home town, its main street "abandoned and decimated". An hour away, in Philadelphia, she says, people can still be seen in what has become known as the "fentanyl fold", bent almost double after taking the drug, still on their feet but "not quite conscious".

Those are the realities beneath the dark fairytale of *The Galloping Cure*. And they still lead her back to the same questions. "What would America be if this crisis had not happened? Where would these people be? Where would my cousins be?"

***The Galloping Cure* is at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, Aug 9, 11 and 12**

‘Nonna-maxxing’? Why aren’t we celebrating British nans?

Jack Burke with his grandmother Joan

Enough videos of elderly Italians making pasta, says Jack Burke. It’s time we praised the virtues of our own grandmothers

In kitchens across Italy elderly women are becoming influencers by doing what they have been doing all their lives. They roll pasta, simmer tomato sauces, knead bread and shell beans while millions of younger viewers watch, slack-jawed. For those unacquainted with the trend, it has a name: nonna-maxxing.

Some nonnas command enormous social media followings. Breathless grandchildren film them cooking, gardening, gossiping and issuing instructions in kitchens unsullied by modern convenience. The nonna might be wearing an apron, possibly standing beneath a pergola, her arthritic fingers making the pasta shape she has made every Thursday since 1958.

To a generation exhausted by screens, devoid of human connection and fattened by ultraprocessed food, the Italian grandmother has become an unlikely spiritual and wellness guide.

It is easy to see the appeal. But I am not Italian. I do not have an ancestral home in Puglia, an olive grove or a grandmother who communicated her love through ossobuco. I am British. More specifically, I am a Londoner. And we have our own indigenous grandmother tradition, although we have been slower to recognise its potential as a lifestyle brand.

Why, I wondered, is nobody nan-maxxing?

I could give you the picture-postcard version of British nanhood here: a lilac cardigan, handkerchief tucked up her sleeve, jam cooling on the windowsill. This is the nan of village imaginations, who plays bingo, attends the church fête and boils vegetables until their remains are unidentifiable. Her front room is saved for best, replete with porcelain animals, ticking clocks and a gas fire nobody is permitted to stand too close to. She calls everyone “dear”.

But that was not my nan. Joan Burke, née Sands, was my dad’s mum — a born-and-bred Londoner from Cricklewood, toughened by the Blitz and later transplanted to Kenton.

She was a battleaxe, tough as nails. Loyal, kind, funny, fearsome, heroically indiscreet and extremely fond of a drink. She had 14 grandchildren, three of whom were boys. It’s fair to say I was the favourite boy. Nan considered it important that everybody knew. When I was small she would bounce me on her lap and simply announce to the room: “He is the one.”

Teresa Calia and Grazia Incampo from Puglia have gone viral

> “Joan was fearsome, heroically indiscreet and extremely fond of a drink

By the standards of contemporary nonna-maxxing Joan was surprisingly accomplished. She cooked from scratch: roast chickens, casseroles, apple pies, jam tarts, sausages and, after approximately 1975, curries. Some weeks there were steaks, depending on what was lobbed out the back of an unmarked lorry that used to do the neighbourhood rounds. She avoided food waste. She walked to the shops. She maintained an intricate social network of siblings, neighbours, children and grandchildren. She believed in long, unhurried meals, although these generally involved getting pissed with her brothers and sisters over Sunday lunch at the Captain Digby after they had all decamped south to Broadstairs in their seventies.

She was thrifty, capable of making a pound note stretch like a fiver, but rejected the joyless accumulation of money. “There’s no pocket in a shroud,” she once told me, a profligate lesson that has stayed with me.

When I was old enough I would be dispatched to Safeway to buy Nan’s weekly stockpile of white wine. Her only stipulation was that it contain more than 13 per cent alcohol. On one occasion I returned with a crate of bottles coming in at 11.5 per cent. She grabbed me by the collar and pulled my face towards hers. “If I want water,” she hissed, “I’ll go to the tap.”

Nonna-maxxing draws on a nostalgia for a simpler, more substantial life. The problem is not that Britain lacks its own version — it’s that ours has proved harder to photograph attractively. Italian grandmotherhood arrives bathed in sunshine and olive oil. British nanhood comes beneath strip lighting, carrying a handbag full of tissues, betting slips and boiled sweets.

Yet the underlying philosophy is the same. It’s about feeding people, maintaining friendships, protecting your own. Don’t waste your money, but don’t worship it either. Take pleasure in the simple things, say what you mean and enjoy yourself while you’re alive.

Whether nonna-maxxing represents a genuine reckoning by a generation fed up with the way the algorithm has stripped their lives of anything substantial, or merely another form of monetised nostalgia, glorifying the past while airbrushing away its hardships, is impossible to say. But I know which life I would rather have. And I know exactly what my nan would have said if I had tried to film her unscrewing the chardonnay at four o’clock on a Tuesday.

times2

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai difficult

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

	3	8		1			5	
	9		2		5	3		
		2				4		1
				2				
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Sudoku easy

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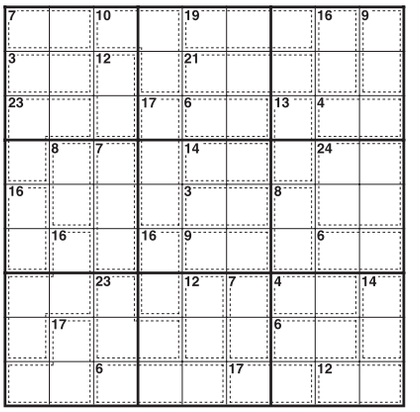
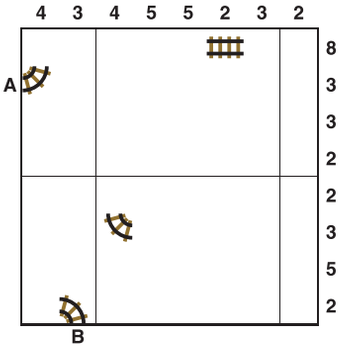
Killer gentle

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



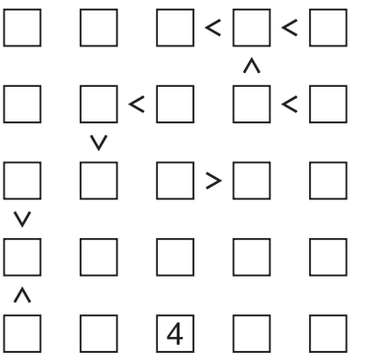
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

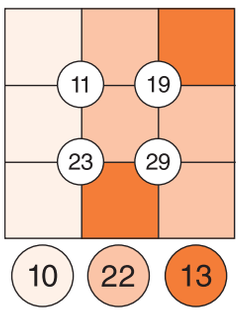


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



Sakuro

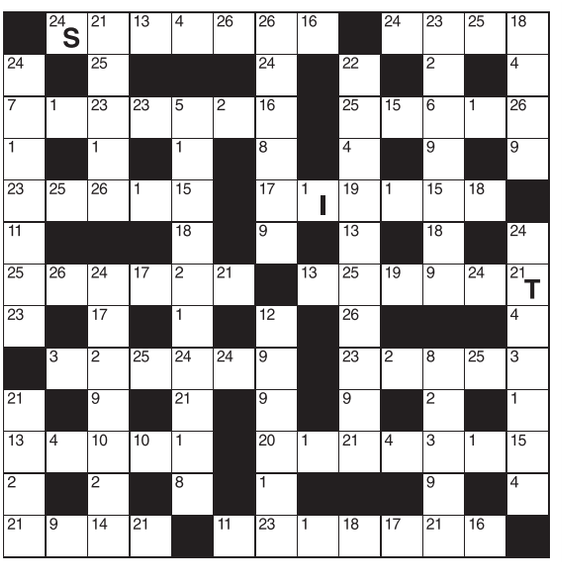


Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.



Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

	1			2	
2					3
		4	3		
		3	6		
4					1
	5			3	

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

2	9	6	4	7	3	5	1	8
3	8	7	1	2	5	4	9	6
1	4	5	9	8	6	7	3	2
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SUDOKU

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KILLER

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SAKURO

MINI SUDOKU

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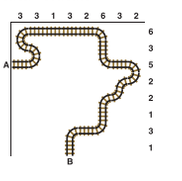
TRAIN TRACKS



FUTOSHIKI

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CODEWORD

B	A	B	Y	■	T	W	I	L	I	G	H	T
E	■	L	■	S	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	U
Q	U	I	E	T	E	R	■	M	I	N	U	S
U	■	N	■	A	■	M	■	U	■	G	■	K
E	L	D	E	R	■	T	H	O	W	N
A	■	■	■	V	■	H	■	■	■	A	■	E
T	A	S	S	E	L	■	L	A	R	Y	N	X
H	■	U	■	■	■	R	■	S	■	■	■	A
■	P	L	A	S	M	A	■	S	T	O	R	M
C	■	P	■	E	■	F	■	I	■	Z	■	I
A	C	H	E	D	■	F	O	G	H	O	R	N
M	■	U	■	A	■	I	■	N	■	N	■	E
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A pleasure to go back behind bars at HMP Slade

Ben Dowell TV review

Joe and David's Magical Sitcom Tour

U&Gold

★★★☆☆

There is something about comedy that stays in your bones more than anything else on TV. It's why sitcoms from the past are lovingly repeated years after they were first shown, provoking fond memories of laughing with the family in your jim-jams. The personalities follow you in later life when you encounter people who remind you of Godber, Partridge or Mainwaring.

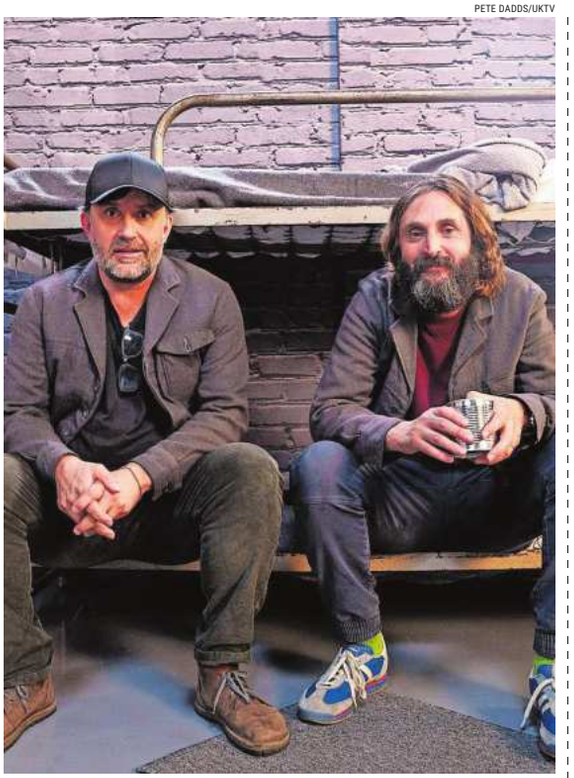
That is the lovely thinking behind *Joe and David's Magical Sitcom Tour*, in which likeably lugubrious Joe Wilkinson (now best known for *The Celebrity Traitors*) and his writing partner David Earl take each other on a tour of locations from their favourite shows, starting with *Porridge*, the Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais 1970s classic that a young, jim-jammed Wilkinson watched adoringly with his mum and dad.

TV needs more ideas like this — ones that serve comic talent in clever ways (think *Last One Laughing* and *Taskmaster*) rather than going for the obvious stage and microphone set-up in flat formats such as (the now axed) *Live at the Apollo*. The problem was that Wilkinson and Earl slightly, but only slightly, fluffed their lines.

They were too in love with the idea, spending far too much time on a sofa watching Earl take Wilkinson to *Porridge* locations and chuckling about it like a pair of executive producers viewing the rushes and deciding on the final edit. Did that time Earl got his mate to stand in Ronnie Barker's former living room give a tingle? And what about the visit to the long since demolished site of the rehearsals? How emotional did he feel? Why did he cry at that bit and not the other? I wanted more reflections on what exactly it was about Barker's tubby con Fletcher and Richard Beckinsale's adorable Godber that touched Wilkinson's soul.

Still, there were some delightful sequences among some odd ones.

PETE DADDS/UKTV



David Earl and Joe Wilkinson recreated the cell from Porridge

Much of the budget (£8,000, in fact) was blown on recreating Barker and Godber's cell set that played host to a set piece visit from Christopher Biggins, who was the prison cook (and knitter) Lukewarm. But this was less of a surprise because we had seen him in the opening credits. And why no acknowledgment of Lukewarm being one of British sitcom's pioneering gay characters? Why take Wilkinson from the site of Barker's old home to Ealing Studios in a black cab with a not especially accurate and mute Barker lookalike? Earl's incessant talk about resurrecting "ghosts" from the show got on even his mate's nerves.

As likeable as these two were, this was more of an experience for them than for the viewers. Even their chinwag with Clement and La Frenais didn't yield anything particularly surprising. Yes, they got the idea of prison life as a series of small victories from a real former lag. And yes, they were flattered and delighted that the show was still loved, with no one saying that they knew at the time how adored it would be (which all TV folk say, so as not to appear big-headed).

Later episodes on *The Office* and *Fawlty Towers* are better, but this opener showed the flaws of a format a little too in love with its cleverness and so boxed in by its conceit that even a governor's pardon couldn't set it free.

Radio choice

BBC Proms
Radio 3, 8.10pm

A double bill begins with a concert recorded in Middlesbrough that is part of the Proms Across the UK series. Featured are the Unthanks, *above*, and guests English Teacher, Conor J O'Brien and Jodie Nicholson, accompanied by the Royal Northern Sinfonia conducted by Ellie Slorach. At 10.15pm is the live *Prom Under African Skies: The Songs of Graceland*, which marks the 40th anniversary of Paul Simon's album. Simon's collaborators on the album, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and their guests perform with the Nu Civilisation Orchestra. Lopa Kothari presents the concert.
Clair Woodward

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan **6.00** Kate McCann and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Sebastian Payne **2.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover **4.00** John Pienaar with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am Sara Cox **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Jo Whiley **9.00** The Folk Show with Mark Radcliffe **10.00** Melvin Odoom **12.00** Connor Phillips **3.00am** Dance Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Elizabeth Alker introduces highlights from the Proms, including music by Scriabin, chamber performances from the 2026 Ryedale Festival and Baroque music from Fribourg.
BBC Proms: Tchaikovsky (Violin Concerto in D, Op 35); International Sacred Music Festival, Fribourg: Galuppi (*Nisi Dominus*); BBC Proms: Scriabin (Symphony No 2 in C); Ryedale Festival: Wagner (arr. A. Bonardi) (*Wesendonck Lieder*)
3.00 Choral Evensong
From St James's Picadilly, London, with Genesis Sixteen, with music by Lassus and Eoghan Desmond. Robert Quinney is the organist
4.00 Composer of the Week: Mozart (1756-1791)
Kate Molleson looks at five people who influenced Mozart and his music, continuing with Joseph Haydn, who became a mentor and a father figure
5.00 In Tune
6.00 Live BBC Proms 2026
Kahchun Wong conducts the Hallé in music by Ravel and Rachmaninov with pianist Alexandra Dariescu joining them for Nadia Boulanger's poetic Fantasy for piano. Ravel orch. Colin Matthews (*La vallée des cloches*); Boulanger (Fantasy for piano and orchestra) 6.25 Interval 6.45 Rachmaninov (Symphony No 2 in E minor)
8.10 Choice BBC Proms 2026
The Unthanks and friends with Royal Northern Sinfonia recorded in concert at Middlesbrough Town Hall. Presented by Elizabeth Alker. The Unthanks, English Teacher, Jodie Nicholson, Royal Northern Sinfonia, conductor Ellie Slorach
10.15 Live BBC Proms 2026
Ladysmith Black Mambazo and guests celebrate 40 years of Paul Simon's *Graceland* album. Presented by Lopa Kathari, from the Royal Albert Hall, London
11.45 'Round Midnight
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary
5.04 BBC Inside Science (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Sideways
Matthew Syed explores why positivity is often the default response to difficult news (4/8)
9.30 Breakin' the Cycle
Colin and D begin production, but remain tempted by their lucrative drug business (2/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 A Romanian Ransom (r)
11.40 This Week in History
11.45 Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away
Tony hears about disputes over inheritance (3/5) (r)
12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 The Bare Necessities
The construction of houses on stilts in Perthshire (3/5)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: United Kingdoms
Five short plays on the theme of Hoping (3/5) (r)
3.00 Precious Stones (r)
3.30 The Ocean within Us
Why the human body contains so much water
4.00 The Power of Guilt (3/5) (r)
4.15 The Media Show
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Best Medicine (2/6)
7.00 The Archers
7.15 Front Row
8.00 AntiSocial (5/6) (r)
8.45 Café Hope
GP Dr Susan Taheri discusses the Growing Well Garden (6/7) (r)
9.00 Invisible Hands
The man who started the Cold War with a telegram (2/6) (r)
9.30 Inside Health (5/6) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield (3/10)
11.00 Sunil Patel: An Idiot's Guide to Living Forever
Sunil tries to make a baby (5/6)
11.15 Follow the Rabbit (2/5) (r)
11.30 Hollywood and the Adland Five (3/4)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away (3/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am Bridget Christie: Mortal **8.30** Following Pappano **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Best Medicine **9.30** Behind the Taverna **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Sound of Cinema **11.00** The Waiting Game **11.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **12.00** After Henry **12.30pm** Hancock's Half Hour **1.00** Bridget Christie: Mortal **1.30** Following Pappano **1.45** Small Island **2.00** The Ultimate Choice **2.30** Getting Nowhere Fast **3.00** A Wizard of Earthsea **4.00** Sound of Cinema **5.00** The Waiting Game **5.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **6.00** After Henry **6.30** Hancock's Half Hour **7.00** Bridget Christie: Mortal **7.30** Following Pappano **7.45** Small Island **8.00** The Ultimate Choice **8.30** Getting Nowhere Fast **9.00** A Wizard of Earthsea **10.00** Comedy Club: Best Medicine **10.30** Mitch Benn's Crimes Against Music **11.00** Dave Podmore's Cricket Night **11.30** Dial M for Pizza

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Sarah-Jane Mee **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** Cricket **9.30** Sport's Strangest Crimes Presents… **10.00** Johnny l'Anson **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Alan Brazil **10.00** Adam Catterall & Darragh McAnthony **1.00pm** Max Rushden & Charlie Baker **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** The Transfer Insiders **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Ian Collins **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Mark Dolan **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Emily Pilbeam **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** 6 Music Artist in Residence: Ezra Collective **12.00** Freak Zone Playlist **1.00am** This Cultural Life **2.00** This Cultural Life **3.00** 6 Music Live Hour **4.00** 6 Music's Jukebox

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am Steve Denyer on The Chris Evans Breakfast Show with Moneybox **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Stu Elmore

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Dan Walker **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with Zeb Soanes **9.00** Classic FM's Composer Carousel With Zeb Soanes **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

Mary Beard Remembers — Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit
BBC4, 8.55pm

In 2016 Mary Beard presented *Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit*, a series that set out to ask how "a piddling little cattle town in central Italy" became an imperial mega-power. Here, the classicist shares her memories of working on the series, discussing how she wanted to underline the diversity and geographical reach of the Roman Empire. The first episode is repeated tonight at 9.10pm, exploring Rome's earliest origins as a place of asylum for exiles and outsiders, before Beard heads to Greece and France. First, though, hear her reminisce about filming the show in various locations, recalling terrible weather, an embarrassing attempt at reading an inscription lying down outside Seville Cathedral and the historical use of pizza. **Victoria Segal**

Mary Beard (BBC4, from 8.55pm)

Extraordinary Extensions
Channel 4, 8pm

Two very different builds are featured in this episode, as Tinie Tempah first meets a couple who are lavishing a whopping £3.5 million on transforming their home into a Marbella-inspired luxury resort, complete with pool house, nightclub, wellness space, fire pit and outdoor kitchen. Lucky neighbours. Meanwhile, in southwest London we follow the progress of a couple who want to bring a taste of experimental Chinese timber architecture to their terraced home. **Joe Clay**

Voices of the Valleys
Sky Arts/Now, 8pm

"It's the sound of pride and identity… it's a brotherhood." So says one of the members of a Welsh male-voice choir that is featured in this stirring three-part documentary series. It follows three choirs, hailing from different parts of Wales, and their

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.15 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.45 Expert Witness (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r) (AD)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
1.35 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.45 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. Sarah Moore tries to trick the eye by updating a display cabinet
2.45 Escape to the Country. Sonali Shah tours the East Midlands in search of a property to suit buyers who, for the past 23 years, have been living in the USA (r)
3.45 The Bidding Room. A small package holding 400 years of history is revealed
4.30 The Answer Run. Quiz show presented by Jason Manford
5.15 Pointless. Quiz hosted by Alexander Armstrong and Konnie Huq (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show Presented by Alex Jones and Vernon Kay

7.30 EastEnders Mark tries to win Lauren's attention, while Sheila puts her plan into action (AD)

8.00 The Repair Shop Experts restore a pair of original seats from Arsenal's Highbury stadium, a broken locket from the Second World War, a shop ledger from 1909 and a chapel from a model village (r) (AD)

9.00 Murder 24/7 Part two of two. The documentary follows police attempts to build a case against Matthew Jonathan for the murder — and the bloody footprint that provided a breakthrough (6/8) (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 FILM: You're Cordially Invited (15, 2025) Two different wedding parties discover they have been accidentally booked on the same day at the same dream venue. Comedy starring Will Ferrell, Reese Witherspoon and Meredith Hagner. *See film choice*

12.25am The Hit List Celebrity Special Marvin and Rochelle Humes present as radio host Chloe Burrows and rapper Aitch, *Gladiators* stars Sabre and Nitro, and *Emmerdale* actors Lisa Riley and Dominic Brunt compete in the quickfire music quiz (r) **1.15-6.00** BBC News

BBC2

6.30am Money for Nothing (r)
7.15 The Bidding Room (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Great Japanese Railway Journeys (r) (AD, SL)
8.30 Great Continental Railway Journeys (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
1.00pm Richard Osman's House of Games. With Sean Fletcher, Louise Minchin, Chris Washington and Kimberly Wyatt (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 Live Cricket: The Hundred: Trent Rockets Women v Birmingham Phoenix Women. (Start-time **3.00**). Coverage of the match from Trent Bridge. The Phoenix won the toss and elected to bat when these teams faced each other at Edgbaston last year, and went on to post a total of 148/5 from their 100 balls, which proved to be enough for victory as the Rockets fell 11 runs short in their innings, despite Nat Sciver-Brunt scoring 64 from 40 deliveries

6.00 Live Cricket: The Hundred: Trent Rockets Men v Birmingham Phoenix Men (Start-time **6.30**). Coverage of the match from Trent Bridge in Nottingham. The Rockets claimed a six-wicket victory when these teams clashed at Edgbaston last season, thanks largely to the efforts of fast bowler Lockie Ferguson who three wickets with his 20 balls and helped restrict the Phoenix to 122/6, which the Rockets surpassed with 22 balls to spare

9.30 Live at the Apollo Ria Lina hosts the comedy show, introducing Lucy Beaumont and Josh Pugh (2/7) (r)

10.00 The Big Cases — The Funeral Home Horror How an undertaker betrayed families. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Victoria Derbyshire

11.05 Uncanny The case of a student house believed to be haunted by a malevolent entity, which is one of the most unsettling cases Danny Robins has come across (3/3) (r) (AD)

12.05am The Devil in the Family: The Fall of Ruby Franke Ruby and Jodi's partnership deepens as together they reshape the family (r) (AD) **12.55-1.50** Sign Zone: Amityville: An Origin Story. Ronnie DeFeo Jr is accused of murder after his family is found shot to death (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning. A mix of celebrity chat, lifestyle features, advice and competitions
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and the team are in Oldham, where Simon Schneider is squeezed to splash the cash for some stunning candlesticks (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh hosts as contestants from Glasgow, Surrey, Essex and Leicester join forces in the hope that their four brains can beat one (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Deal or No Deal: Banker's Best Battles Stephen Mulhern revisits two battles between hopeful players and the infamous Banker

8.00 Emmerdale A decision is made to give the dog a good send-off (AD)

8.30 Coronation Street Kit tells Bethany of Gary's role in Sarah's crime (AD)

9.00 Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Big-prize quiz hosted by Jeremy Clarkson in which another line-up of contestants answer questions that could change their lives (r)

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell investigate the cases of foundlings from Leicester and London in 1983 and 1960 (r) (AD)

11.45 The Assembly Rapper Aitch is interviewed by neurodivergent individuals (5/8) (r)

12.10am Shop on TV 3.00 Love & Death. Allan grows concerned when his repeated calls to Betty go unanswered (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel (r) (AD, SL) **4.15** Unwind **5.35-6.00** Tom Kerridge Cooks Italy. Tom forages for truffles in Umbria (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Henry Cole and Simon O'Brien head to Suffolk (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. A pair of first-time renovators take on a dormer bungalow in Anglesey (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Ade Adepitan
3.00 A Place in the Sun. Ben Hillman helps a couple from Clacton-on-Sea find a permanent home in Almeria, Spain (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. The owners of Elizabethan Pitchford Hall in Shropshire are puzzled by dangerous sinkholes on the estate (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. A pair of new chateau owners uncover a nasty surprise (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. Mike Wolfe makes a move on Gypsy Grandma, the queen of arcade games (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Extraordinary Extensions A couple who are turning their Surrey home into a Marbella-inspired party pad, complete with dance floor and pool house. Plus, experimental Chinese timber architecture in London. *See picks of the day* (AD)

9.00 The Undeclared War Barbara comes under Charlie's scrutiny as tragedy strikes GCHQ. Meanwhile, Danny, Saara and Roz try to help Vadim escape, and Danny makes an earth-shattering discovery (5/6) (AD)

10.00 The Undeclared War Danny puts everything on the line in order to right some wrongs, and Roz and the team race against the clock to find out what the malware is searching for. Last in the series (AD)

11.00 24 Hours in A&E A 21-year-old man is rushed in after a motorbike accident leaving him with leg and lung injuries. A 69-year-old, who has locked-in-syndrome, has trouble breathing (6/7) (r) (AD)

12.05am Celebrity Hunted (r) (AD, SL) **1.50** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r) (SL) **2.40** Dictator: The Hitler Interviews (r) (AD, SL) **3.30** Dover 24/7 (r) (AD, SL) **4.30** Grand Designs (r) (AD, SL) **5.20** Kirstie and Phil's Love It or List It: Brilliant Builds (r) (AD, SL) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.15 FILM: A Town Called Murder (PG, TVM, 2023) A couple break down on a road trip through the desert, and as they head to a nearby town, one of them suddenly goes missing. Thriller starring Kayleigh Ruller
4.00 Castle. An old friend of Castle hires him to find out if her husband is cheating on her, but when he witnesses her being killed he has no proof a murder has taken place (r)
4.55 Love Nature. The colony of Atlantic puffins on St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Majorca: A Year in the Sun. Cameras focus on a Michelin starred ex-pat chef who is on a mission to celebrate the best of Majorca's produce, while a group of volunteers dives into the unknown (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 Car Pound Cops With exclusive access to car pounds, police forces, local council enforcement agencies and national organisations, we track cars as they are seized for a variety of offences (6/8) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts A former nurse is brought in with a suspected dislocated ankle, and paramedics rush in a 70-year-old with a low heart rate. Last in the series

9.00 999: Critical Condition A woman arrives potentially paralysed following a car crash and a man faces life-threatening surgery to remove a tumour from his head

10.00 Ambulance: Code Red Paramedics respond to calls of a man who has collapsed in a hotel bathroom, a head-on collision between two motorcyclists, and a woman with a broken leg (r) (AD)

11.05 Cause of Death Lancashire Police investigate when the body of a man is found in a field, part of his ear is missing and he is discovered to be laid on top of his wellington boots (8/10) (r)

12.05am A&E After Dark (r) (AD) **1.00** Cruise TV with LoveitBookit (r) **2.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **2.50** Castle (r) **3.40** Friends. American comedy (r) **4.35** The Highland Vet (r) (SL) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Milo (r) (SL) **5.45-6.00** The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

conductors (one of whom is a woman) as they all prepare for key events in the choral calendar. As with all docuseries of this ilk, it is as much about the people as their craft, painting a picture of life in Wales and the problems facing men in deindustrialised communities. **Joe Clay**

The Funeral Home Horror
BBC2, 10pm

In 2025 Robert Bush, owner of Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull, was charged with preventing 30 "lawful and decent" burials and fraud relating to the ashes of many more. This edition of *The Big Cases* follows the investigation, with shocking footage of the police raids that uncovered 35 decomposing bodies, 167 sets of human ashes and widespread fraud. Some of the betrayed families feature, revealing how they were given strangers' remains, while personal items of the deceased were carelessly "tossed aside". **JC**

STREAMING CHOICE

One Hundred Years of Solitude
Netflix

Picking up where season one left off, with the death of José Arcadio Buendía (Diego Vásquez) and Colonel Aureliano Buendía (Claudio Cataño) saved from death by firing squad, the second and final part of this epic, Spanish-language adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's 1967 magical realist masterpiece continues at the same stately pace. This time the muggy opulence has been replaced by a mood of desolate valediction. The show continues to be strange and unsettling, reworking the clichés of the historical family saga in many subtle ways. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

You're Cordially Invited (15, 2024)
BBC1, 10.40pm

The writer-director Nicholas Stoller has taken an exhausted genre (the wedding comedy) and brought the whole thing to vivid, side-splitting life. Reese Witherspoon and Will Ferrell play the antagonists of a weekend wedding nightmare that occurs when two fraught nuptials are accidentally booked for the same date, on the same tiny, alligator-infested island in Georgia. Ferrell plays the dad of the first bride, while Witherspoon is the alpha sister of the second bride. The gag-per-minute ratio is staggering. (109min) **Ed Potton**

BBC4

7.00pm Great British Railway Journeys. York to Skipton (AD)
7.30 Wainwright Walks (AD)
8.00 The Treasures of Ancient Rome. Documentary (2/3)
8.55 Mary Beard Remembers — Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit. The historian looks back to her 2016 series. *See picks of the day*
9.10 Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit. The myths and revolutions of the Roman Empire. *See picks of the day* (AD)
10.10 I, Claudius (3/12)
11.05 I, Claudius (4/12)
11.55 The Treasures of Ancient Rome. How sex and violence was depicted in Roman art (2/3)
12.55am Wainwright Walks (AD)
1.55 Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit (AD, SL)
2.55am-3.25 Great British Railway Journeys. York to Skipton (AD, SL)

Sky Arts

8.00am The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Richard Harris (AD)
12.00 Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour (b/w) **3.00** The Seventies (AD) **4.00** Discovering: James Coburn (AD) **5.00** Best of Portrait Artist of the Year 2021 (AD)
6.00 Tales of the Unexpected (AD)
7.00 Alfred Hitchcock Presents
8.00 Voices of the Valleys. Three male voice choirs from across Wales. *See picks of the day*
9.00 Bryn Terfel: Celtic Beethoven
10.25 Riverdance 25th Anniversary Show. At Dublin's 3Arena
12.25am The Eighties (AD) **1.20** Rik Mayall's Sketches: Rare and Unseen **2.15-3.10** Cleo Laine: The Unseen Home Movies (AD)

More4

8.55am Heir Hunters **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS (AD) **6.50** Car SOS (AD)
7.55 Grand Designs. A home shaped like two enormous periscopes in Norfolk (6/10) (AD)
9.00 The Roman Empire by Train with Alice Roberts. The anthropologist explores key sites of the Roman empire (AD)
10.00 24 Hours in Police Custody: The Butcher of Suburbia. Part one of two. The inside story of the murder of a 74-year-old woman (AD)
11.05 24 Hours In Police Custody: The Butcher of Suburbia (2/2) (AD)
12.10am 999: On the Front Line
1.15 24 Hours in Police Custody: The Butcher of Suburbia (AD) **2.20** 24 Hours In Police Custody: The Butcher of Suburbia (AD)
3.25am-3.55 A Place in the Sun

Kevin Alcántara of Chicago Cubs, TNT Sports 1, 7.15pm

Live sport today

Live Men's Cycling World Tour
TNT Sports 3, 11am-3.45pm
Coverage of the third stage of the 2026 Tour of Poland

Live Tour de France Women
TNT Sports 1, 12.30pm-5.45
Coverage from the fifth stage of the Grand Tour race, a 140km route from Mâcon to Belleville-en-Beaujolais

Live Test Cricket: West Indies v Pakistan
TNT Sports 2, 2.30pm-11.00
Coverage of the fourth day of the second and final Test in the series from Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad and Tobago

Live MLB: Chicago Cubs v Los Angeles Dodgers
TNT Sports 1, 7.15pm-10
(Start-time **7.20**). Coverage of the National League match

Live Tennis
Sky Sports Tennis, 12midnight-4am
The Canadian Open. Further coverage from day four of the ATP 1000 event in Montreal and the WTA 1000 event in Toronto

Talking Pictures

6.00am FILM: Sandokan: Pirate of Malaysia (PG, 1964) 8.10 FILM: Guilty? (PG, 1956) (b/w) **10.00 FILM: The First of the Few (U, 1942)** (b/w) **12.20pm** Scotland Yard **1.00** The Buccaneers (b/w) **1.35** London's Canal Ride in the 1950s
1.45 FILM: Up in the World (U, 1956) (b/w) **3.30** Look at Life
3.45 Dial 999 (b/w) **4.20 FILM: The Bells Go Down (U, 1943)** (b/w)
6.10 So This Is London
6.30 Give Us a Clue
7.00 Out of Town
7.30 Travelling Man (6/7)
8.35 An Englishman Abroad
9.50 FILM: From Here to Eternity (PG, 1953) Second World War drama starring Burt Lancaster (b/w)
12.10am FILM: The Brave Don't Cry (U, 1952) (b/w) **2.00 FILM: The Night Visitor (15, 1971) 4.00-5.00** Stagecoach West (b/w)

Film4

11.00am My Spy (12, 2020) Comedy starring Dave Bautista
12.55pm Monkey Business (U, 1952) Comedy starring Cary Grant (b/w) (AD) **2.50 Siege at Red River (U, 1954)** Western starring Van Johnson **4.35 Heaven Knows, Mr Allison (PG, 1957)** Second World War romantic drama starring Robert Mitchum and Deborah Kerr
6.40 Steel Magnolias (PG, 1989) Drama starring Sally Field, Julia Roberts and Dolly Parton (AD)
9.00 Speed (15, 1994) A cop tries to save the passengers on a bus that is wired to explode if it goes below 50mph. Action thriller starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock
11.15 Ambulance (15, 2022) Crime drama starring Jake Gyllenhaal (AD)
2.00am-3.45 Downhill (15, 2020) Comedy with Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Will Ferrell and Miranda Otto

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up
7.05 Deadly 60
7.30 Deadly 60
8.00 Top Gear. The Lotus T125 and a demolition challenge
9.00 Top Gear. A road trip across Australia's Northern Territory
10.00 Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee. New series. Hannah Gadsby and Lloyd Langford join a panel of comedians taking on TV's silliest spelling test
10.50 Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee. A fresh panel of comedians to spell their way through a dating round
11.40 Dinosaur (AD)
12.05am Dinosaur (AD) **1.00** Jesy Nelson: Odd One Out (AD) **2.00** James Arthur: Out of Our Minds (r) (AD) **3.00am-4.00** Zara McDermott: Disordered Eating (AD, SL)

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City
8.20 The Real Housewives of Orange County **9.20** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor USA (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City. The trip to Santorini culminates in a dramatic final dinner **5.00** The Real Housewives of Orange County
6.00 Celebrity Catchphrase (AD)
7.00 The Floor USA (AD)
8.00 The 1% Club (AD)
9.00 Family Guy (AD)
11.35 American Dad! (AD)
12.35am Bob's Burgers (AD)
1.00am-2.40 The Real Housewives of Orange County

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders. Crime drama (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat (AD)
8.00 Midsomer Murders. A land dispute leads to murder (AD)
10.00 Grantchester. A student from a prestigious all-female college is found dead (1/6) (AD)
11.00 Grantchester. Will and Leonard witness a deadly and deliberate hit-and-run (2/6) (AD)
11.50 Trial & Retribution. Three-part drama. A teacher is found dead and her boyfriend is arrested (5/10)
12.50am Wycliffe **2.00am-2.25** George and Mildred

ITV4

6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.05** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **9.05** Boon **10.15** The Professionals (AD) **11.25** Robin of Sherwood **12.30pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.35** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **3.40** Boon **4.50** The Professionals (AD) **5.55** Minder. Arthur cashes in on a footballer's disappearance (AD)
7.00 Aussie Pickers. A collection of Aussie memorabilia that has been voted as the best in Australia
8.00 Beat the Chasers — Celebrity Special. Nish Kumar, Chris McCausland, Mary Earps and Alexander Armstrong take part
9.00 FILM: RoboCop (18, 1987) Sci-fi thriller starring Peter Weller
11.05 All Elite Wrestling: Collision. Hard-hitting action from the US
1.05am Minder (AD, SL) **2.00am-3.00** The Professionals (AD, SL)

U&Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.25** The Bill **8.15** Doctors **9.25** Classic Holby City **10.45** Casualty (AD) **11.45** The Bill **12.45pm** Classic EastEnders
2.00 Neighbours **3.00** Pie in the Sky **4.05** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **7.20** Last of the Summer Wine
8.00 Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD)
9.00 The Chelsea Detective. Emma admits that a huge rift came between her and her father when he had an affair with her friend, but she denies murdering him (6/9) (AD)
10.00 New Tricks. The squad reinvestigates the disappearance of a political activist (6/8) (AD)
11.20 Luther. The detective faces suspension (3/6) (AD)
12.40am Lovejoy **1.50** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD)
2.50-4.00 Hotel Portofino (SL)

Variations

BBC1 Scotland
12.25am Scotcast (r) 12.55-1.45am The Hit List Celebrity Special (r)

BBC1 Wales
8.00pm Shift the Thrift (r) 8.30-9.00 Our Lives: The Last Miner in the Band 10.40 Undercover: Cancer Cure or Con? 11.00 FILM: You're Cordially Invited (2025) 12.45am The Hit List Celebrity Special (r) 1.30am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2 N Ireland
9.30pm-10.00pm The Band (r)

STV
9.00pm-10.00pm Coroner: STV Player Presents

UTV
10.45pm UTV at the Fleadh. The celebration heads to Belfast 11.15 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel. The CEO arrives 11.45pm-12.10am Deal or No Deal: Banker's Best Battles

BBC Scotland
7.00pm News 7.30 Scotland's Home of the Year 2024 (r) 8.00 Island Crossings (r) 9.00 David Wilson's Crime Files (r) 10.00 River City 10.30 Icons of Football (r) 11.00 Scotcast 11.30pm-12.00 Des Doesn't Do — Winter Sports (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 10.00 Blociau Rhif (r) 10.05 Crawc a'i Ffrindiau (r) 10.15 Deian a Loli (r) 10.30 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 12.00 News 12.05pm Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2.00 News 2.05 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 7.30 News 7.50 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 9.45 Pawb a'i Farn 10.45 Y Babell Lên 11.15pm-12.20am Ty Ffit (r)

PBS America

8.00am America the Bountiful **8.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **9.40** Pirates: Behind the Legends **10.40** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **11.55** Hitler's Gold **1.00pm** America the Bountiful **1.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **2.35** Hitler's Gold **3.35** Pirates: Behind the Legends **4.35** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **5.50** Hitler's Gold **6.50** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall. Documentary **7.50** Pirates: Behind the Legends **8.50** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation. How, by late 1949, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe was total (2/3) **10.00** Hitler's Gold **11.00** Pirates: Behind the Legends **12.00** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **1.15am-2.00** America the Bountiful

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.20** Heated Rivalry (r) (AD) **12.30pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.30** Billions (r) (AD) **4.40** Heated Rivalry (r) (AD)
6.50 The Penguin (r) (AD)
7.55 The Penguin. Oz tries to play the Falcone and Maroni families to his advantage (2/8) (r) (AD)
9.00 House of the Dragon. *Game of Thrones* prequel following the story of House Targaryen. Matt Smith and Emma D'Arcy star (r)
10.15 Station Eleven. Miranda reflects on her relationships with Arthur and Dr Eleven (3/10) (r)
11.15 Station Eleven (4/10) (r)
12.15am True Detective: Night Country (r) (AD) **1.30** Sort Of (r) (AD) **2.00** Possession. New series. Supernatural thriller starring Gugu Mbatha-Raw (AD) **4.05** Billions (r) (AD) **5.10am-6.00** Urban Secrets (r)

Sky Docs

6.00am The 2000s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Bruce Willis (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.00** The Comedy Store (r) (AD) **11.05** UFO (r) (AD) **12.00** AKA Mr Chow (r) **1.50pm** My Icon: Pam Cookey (r) (AD) **2.00 FILM: Spitfire (PG, 2018)** The story of British single-seat fighter plane the Supermarine Spitfire **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Bruce Willis (r) (AD) **5.55** JFK: Destiny Betrayed (r)
7.00 The Alien Autopsy Scandal. Documentary about an alleged film of an extra-terrestrial (r) (AD)
8.00 Blur: To the End (r)
10.00 Groomed: The Truth Behind the Lie (1/3) (r) (AD)
11.00 Murder at the Post Office (r)
12.00 Murder at the Post Office (r)
2.00am-5.00 Kings from Queens: The Run DMC Story (r)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** The Green Planet. The methods plants use to thrive in the changing seasons (AD)
8.00 Michael Palin: Travels of a Lifetime. Michael Palin revisits his travel series, beginning with *Around the World in 80 Days*
9.00 Simon Reeve's South America **10.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **2.00-3.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD)

MindGames

Poker Byron Jacobs

The price of equanimity

Last week's article dealt with an interesting concept for cash game play (not tournaments) that is now routinely offered by most sites. There will come occasions when one of the players competing in a pot is all-in (ie has no further chips to bet). At this point the music stops, hands are turned face up and the remaining board cards are dealt. Whoever then has the best hand scoops the pot.

Clearly this element of the game is decided purely by luck. When the players' hands are revealed, it is possible to calculate the equity each player has in the pot. This may seem like a complicated proposition but, of course, the software does it instantly. Let's assume the pot is (conveniently) exactly $100. Maybe it's close. Player A has 55 per cent equity and player B 45. Either can "cash out" their equity (A receiving $55 and B $45). They don't both have to agree for this to happen. If one takes the offer and the other prefers to "gamble" they can do so.

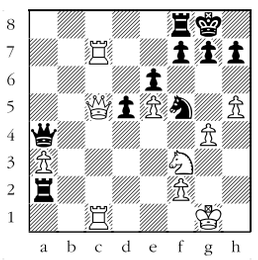
In principle, it makes no difference whether you cash out or not. You win or lose on an individual hand but, in the long run, luck will even out. In poker terms it is a "neutral EV decision". The EV is "expected value" and every poker decision you make should be an attempt to maximise your EV. However, there is a crucial factor involved: the sites don't offer this service free of charge. If you elect to cash out, you pay a small "admin fee", generally one per cent, and this instantly changes the EV situation. Now cashing out generates (a small amount of) negative EV and allowing the cards to be dealt is neutral.

Here is where this gets interesting. The above argument, which is perfectly valid, implies that taking the cash out makes as much sense as paying $101 for a $100 note. Assuming an experienced player knows the site charges this fee (it is not exactly emphasized when the offer appears on the table), they would surely never accept it – right? Not necessarily. Sometimes even experienced players take up the offer, knowing full well what they are doing. Why?

The answer is wrapped up in loss aversion. Imagine you are not about 50/50 in the $100 pot but you have K-K, Villain has 10-10 and the board is J-9-4-4 with one card to be dealt. Only a 10 will scupper you and you have over 95 per cent equity. If you don't take the "insurance" of the cash out you risk losing $95 just to chase an extra $5. If you know that losing this pot will disturb you (it shouldn't but, unless you are a stoic philosopher, that's easier said than done) and have a serious detrimental effect on your future play, you may prefer to take the small hit to maintain emotional equanimity. On occasion we can all be willing to pay a little to avoid psychological discomfort. Poker players are no exception.

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki
go to page 10

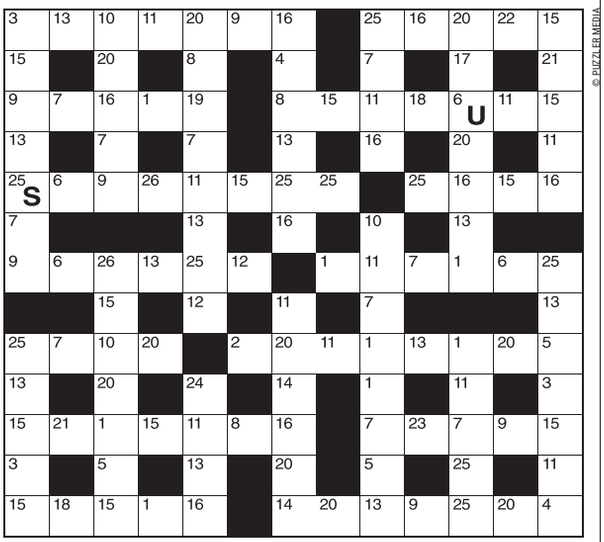
Winning Move



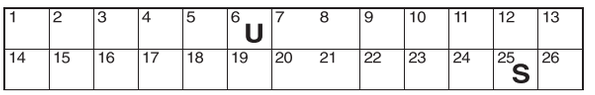
White to play.
This position is from Zierk-Hnatyshyn, chess.com 2026.

At first sight this appears to be a straightforward position. The black knight on f5 is threatened and there seems no good reason not to play 1 gxf5. However, 1 gxf5 would be met by 1 ... Qg4+ when, perhaps surprisingly, Black's counterplay is enough to secure a draw by perpetual check. White found a far more creative solution. Can you see it?

Codeword No 5911



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



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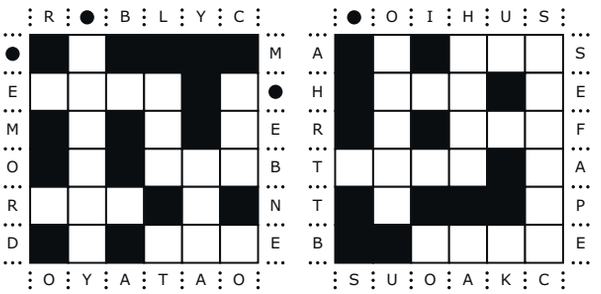
Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

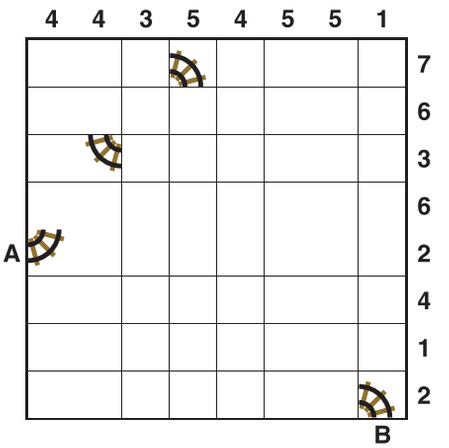
Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9035 Hard No 9036



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2936



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2638

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Weathercock is useless to auditor (4)

_ _ _ _

2 Wafer-thin goth holding lump of metal (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Silicon jewellery for sister perhaps (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Simpers about stamp (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Convey delight (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	B	E	E	G	G	I
I	I	I	L	M	N	N	N
N	O	O	P	P	R	R	R
S	S	S	S	T	T	T	V

Challenge your mind with these fiendish word and number puzzles

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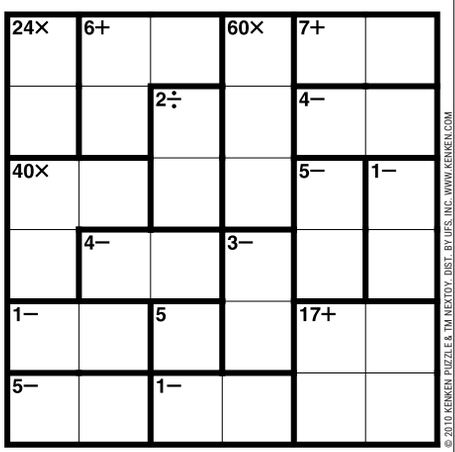
Try Wordhunt and Picle, our new online Quick Play puzzles at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

KenKen Medium No 6903



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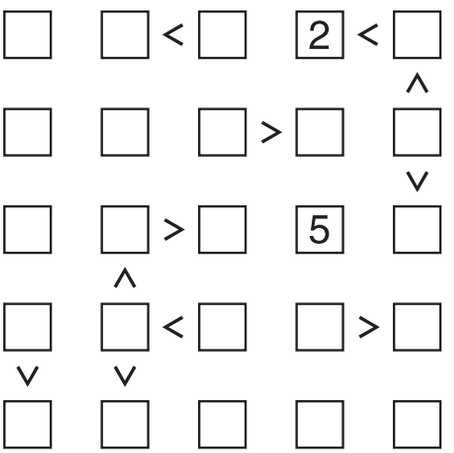
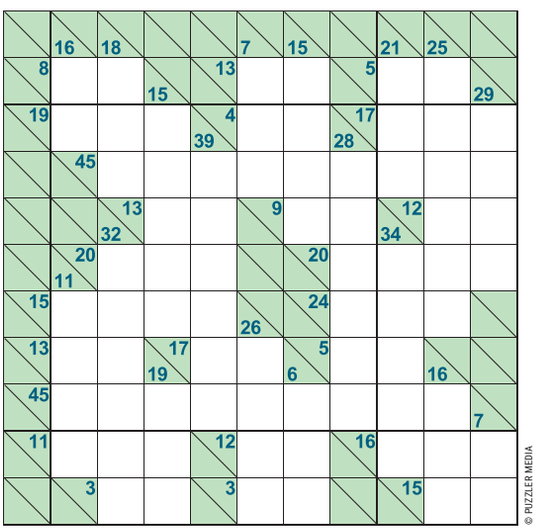
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5451



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4410



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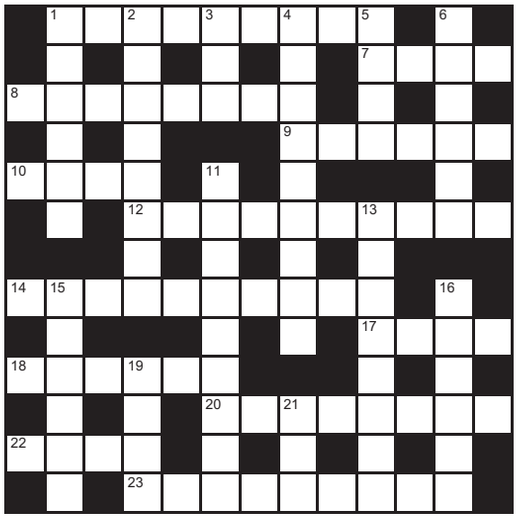
Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,227



Across

1 Contemptible (9)
7 Dry and barren (4)
8 Alec ---, celebrated actor (8)
9 Slow-paced, unhurried (6)
10 Handful of earth (4)
12 Craft of fitting padded coverings to furniture (10)
14 (Of a vehicle) turn less sharply than expected (10)
17 Pungent perfume ingredient (4)
18 Rich cake (6)
20 Expressed contrition (8)
22 Military dining hall (4)
23 Flyer of newly developed aircraft (4,5)

Down

1 Multiply by two (6)
2 Wind-created formation in a desert or on a beach (4,4)
3 Vote in favour (3)
4 Legally terminated (a marriage) (9)
5 Enclosed patch of land (4)
6 Very chilly, raw (6)
11 Type of reference book (9)
13 Battery contact (8)
15 Arrange tidily (6)
16 Upward movement (6)
19 Compass direction (4)
21 Audible time signal (3)

Solution to Crossword 10,226

		C			T	R	A							
C	O	V	E	R	A	G	E		D	H	O	W		
	M		N		R	C		J		U				
	B	I	T	E	T	H	E	D	U	S	T			
			H		A		N		D		S			
O	B	E	R	O	N		T	R	I	V	I	A		
	E		O					C		D				
L	E	A	N	E	R		C	H	A	S	E	R		
	H		E		A		R		T					
	I	M	M	O	R	T	A	L	I	S	E			
	V		E		I		N		O		A			
D	E	A	N		T	O	K	E	N	I	S	M		
			T		Y		Y				E			

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Modern Bidding Developments
31. Fourth Suit Forcing
Priority Replies

Traditionally, and in my previous writings, these have been opener's priority replies to Fourth Suit Forcing (after an auction such as 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦).

1 - Go back to responder's suit with three cards.

2 - Repeat your second suit with five cards.

3 - Repeat your first suit with six cards.

4 - Bid Notrumps with a stopper in the fourth suit.

5 - Go back to responder's suit with a good doubleton.

It's time to bring ourselves in line with modern expert thinking.

Being pedantic, the first priority ought to be raising the fourth suit with four cards in that suit. I used to leave this out, as it doesn't happen very often. But with, say, ♠4, ♥AQ72, ♦AJ53, ♣K732, or ♠-, ♥AQ632, ♦J872, ♣A962, (after 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦), you raise to 3♦.

I want to talk about traditional priorities No 1 and No 5 above. Say you have ♠962, ♥AQJ72, ♦3, ♣A832. You open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠. It is a mistake to rebid 2♣. The problem is that if responder now makes a non-forcing bid such as 2♥, 2NT or 3♣, you are not strong enough to make a third bid, so cannot show your three-card spade support; a 5-3 spade fit may easily be missed. The solution, therefore, is to raise 1♠ to 2♠.

If you have the 3♠5♥1♦4♣ shape with extra values, 16 or more points, you are correct to bid 2♣ (strong enough to make a third bid) — but now you should *jump* in reply to FSF. It follows, therefore, that you'll never have three cards for 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦-2♠: you'll always have only two cards.

So the modern revised priority replies to FSF (when unable to jump to show 16 points) are:

1 - Raise the fourth suit with four cards.

2, 3 and 4 as before.

5 - Go back to responder's suit with a doubleton (any), something of a default reply (*see next Wednesday*).

Dealer: North
Vul: Neither

	♠6 ♥A986 ♦AQ72 ♣K652	
♠KJ93 ♥KJ5 ♦65 ♣QJ94	N W E S	♠Q10 ♥Q107432 ♦1098 ♣108
	♠A87542 ♥- ♦KJ43 ♣A73	

S	W	N	E
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦(1)	Pass	3♦(2)	Pass
6♦(3)	End		

(1) FSF, setting up a game-force and asking for more information (shape prioritising).
(2) First priority: four cards in the fourth suit.
(3) Asking for aces won't help, given the void.

A trump-leading auction, West led ♦5. Winning dummy's ♦A, declarer led to ♠A and ruffed ♠2. She crossed to ♦J and ruffed ♠4 (with ♦Q), East discarding. She now crossed to ♣A, cashed ♦K and conceded ♠5. West won and switched to ♣Q but declarer could win ♣K, cash ♥A dropping ♣7, ruff back to hand and enjoy ♠87. Slam made, with 3NT failing.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY 30	x 4	÷ 6	+ 83	– 17	+½ OF IT	– 75	÷ 9	TRIPLE IT	DOUBLE IT	ANSWER
MEDIUM 60	+ 95	÷ 5	TRIPLE IT	+ 29	– 64	+½ OF IT	DOUBLE IT	x 3	HALVE IT	ANSWER
HARDER 90	÷ 6	x 23	– 173	DOUBLE IT	x 4	HALVE IT	– 460	÷ 12	x 9	ANSWER

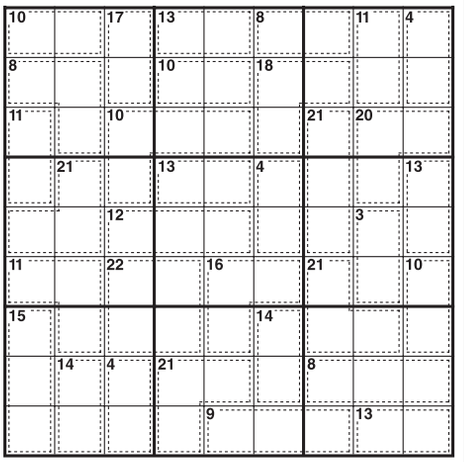
Polygon

From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 16 words, average; 22, good; 25, very good; 28, excellent

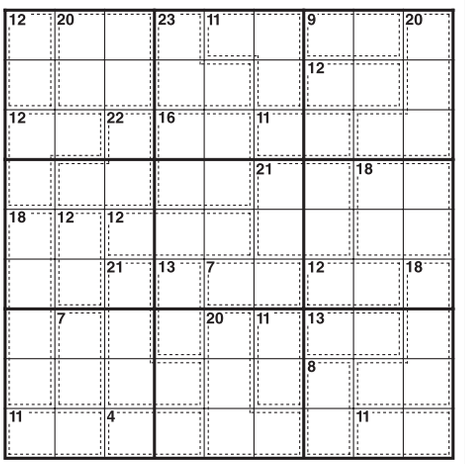
Yesterday's answers

aloe, alto, avo, iota, loa, lot, loti, lovat, love, oat, oil, olé, olive, oval, ovate, toe, toea, toil, toile, veto, viol, viola, **violate**, violet, voe, voila, voile, vole, volet, volt, volte, vote

Killer Tricky No 10,860



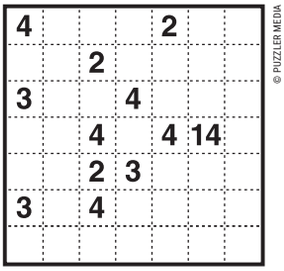
Killer Deadly No 10,861



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines **Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen?** Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Cell Blocks No 5794



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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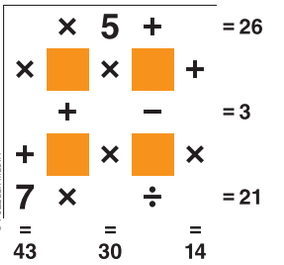
Set Square No 4413



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

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Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3371

B	B		S	A	N	D	I	E	G	O
L	A	M	E	N	T		E		N	L
R		N		A	L	P	H	A	B	E	T
H	I	G	H		Y		A	W		N
T		U			L	E	A			
P	O	R	R	I	D	G	E		Y	E	A	R
N			O		S				M	
B	E	A	R		B	R	E	A	T	H	E	R
	A	L	E				O		N	
D		C	R		P		B	R	A	T
B	O	N	H	O	M	I	E		A	B
N		E	A		E	N	G	U	L	F
R	E	C	L	I	N	E	R		O	E

Codeword 5910

U	S	A	G	E		T	H	U	M	B
M		C	A	P	U		I		E	
E	R	R		S	Q	U	I	B		M	U	M
R		U				F			I	P
C	O	M	A		O	F	F		E	C	H	O
H			W	A	X		L	A	X		W
A	U	R	A		L		O		A	D	Z	E
N			S	K	I		A	R	C		R
D	I	S	H		P	O	T		T	E	R	M
I		E			N				N	E
S	A	P		J	O	U	S	T		T	O	N
E		I		A		S		U	R	T
	C	A	R	R	Y		V	I	N	Y	L

Kakuro 4409

	6	1			5	1		8	9
8	2		6	5	9	4	3	7	8
9	8	4	7	1			1	4	
	5	3			3	7	9		
8	3	2	9		1	3	4	7	2
7	6	5	8	9		1	2	8	3
		1	2	6			8	9	
	1	6			7	1	6	5	9
1	2	9	3	7	5	6		2	6
6	9		1	8				1	8

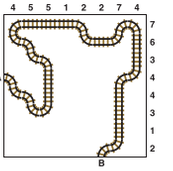
Sudoku 16,998

7	9	2	1	4	3	5	6	8
6	4	3	5	7	8	1	2	9
5	8	1	6	9	2	7	3	4
2	5	9	4	8	6	3	7	1
3	7	4	9	2	1	6	8	5
1	6	8	3	5	7	4	9	2
4	2	6	8	3	5	9	1	7
9	1	7	2	6	4	8	5	3
8	3	5	7	1	9	2	4	6

Tetonor 697

59	136	25	144
1 x 59	4 x 34	9 + 16	16 x 9
135	31	168	32
5 x 27	7 + 24	24 x 7	27 + 5
38	196	26	60
4 + 34	98 x 2	2 + 24	1 + 59
198	48	69	100
3 x 66	24 x 2	66 + 3	98 + 2

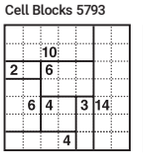
Train Tracks 2935



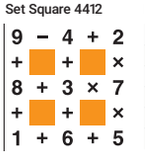
Sudoku 16,999

9	3	6	2	5	1	7	4	8
7	1	4	6	8	3	9	2	5
5	2	8	4	7	9	6	3	1
2	4	5	9	1	6	3	8	7
1	6	9	8	3	7	4	5	2
8	7	3	5	4	2	1	9	6
6	8	2	1	9	4	5	7	3
4	5	7	3	6	8	2	1	9
3	9	1	7	2	5	8	6	4

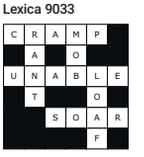
Cell Blocks 5793



Set Square 4412



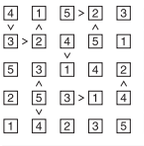
Lexica 9033



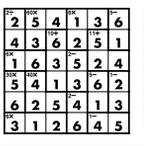
Sudoku 17,000

8	2	1	7	4	9	3	6	5
7	4	9	3	6	5	2	1	8
3	6	5	8	1	2	7	4	9
4	7	8	5	3	1	9	2	6
6	9	3	4	2	8	1	5	7
1	5	2	9	7	6	8	3	4
9	8	6	1	5	3	4	7	2
2	3	4	6	8	7	5	9	1
5	1	7	2	9	4	6	8	3

Futoshiki 5450



KenKen 6902



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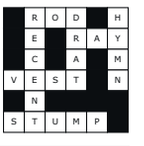

Killer 10,858

4	7	2	6	3	9	5	1	8
3	5	1	8	4	2	7	9	6
9	8	6	7	1	5	4	2	3
1	4	9	2	8	7	6	3	5
8	3	5	1	6	4	9	7	2
6	2	7	9	5	3	8	4	1
5	9	3	4	2	8	1	6	7
7	6	8	3	9	1	2	5	4
2	1	4	5	7	6	3	8	9

Killer 10,859

3	7	1	2	9	8	6	4	5
8	9	5	4	1	6	7	3	2
4	2	6	7	5	3	1	8	9
1	5	8	3	6	2	9	7	4
9	3	7	5	8	4	2	6	1
6	4	2	1	7	9	8	5	3
2	6	9	8	3	5	4	1	7
5	1	4	6	2	7	3	9	8
7	8	3	9	4	1	5	2	6

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Watch
2 Regard
3 Survey
4 Monitor
5 Checkout

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Vane
2 Ingot
3 Sibling
4 Impress
5 Transport

Sakuro 4812

Brain Trainer
Easy 36
Medium 261
Harder 171

Word watch

Eupatrid (b) A hereditary noble or landowner (*Collins*)
Orecchiette (c) Small concave discs of pasta (*Chambers*)
Balaam (a) Trivial filler for a newspaper column (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move

1 Qxf8+! Kxf8 2 Rc8+ Ke7 3 R1c7+ Qd7 4 gxf5 exf5 5 Nd4 and when White captures the black queen he will emerge a piece ahead

Quiz

1 Nottingham **2** California **3** Michelin **4** Vampire bat **5** Edward the Confessor **6** Edward Elgar **7** *Rocky IV* **8** JMW Turner **9** Cinnamon **10** Bassenthwaite Lake **11** *Fortunes of War* **12** Durban **13** LTJ Bukem (Danny Williamson) **14** York City **15** Jack Whitehall

THE TIMES

05.08.26

MindGames

For extra puzzles
See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Eupatrid
a An advocate of monetary union
b A hereditary noble
c Completely decomposed

Orecchiette
a A dungeon accessed through its roof
b An egg-shaped wind instrument
c Small concave discs of pasta

Balaam
a Trivial filler for a newspaper column
b A respectful gesture of salutation
c Whalebone

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Difficult No 17,001

		9						
2			7	8				
		5		1	9	6		
1			5				4	9
	5				4			
8			6				2	7
		2		5	8	1		
4			2	7				
		8						

Fiendish No 17,002

		4						
6				5			3	
			2	6	1		4	
		3					9	7
		8	1		7	4		
2	4					5		
	9		8	3	2			
	8			7				6
						8		

Super fiendish No 17,003

			5					
			8	4	1			
				1	4	6	3	
3								8
	8	7	4		6	9	3	
2								1
4	2	8	9					
		9	5	1				
			4					

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

LISA O'CONNOR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

1 Robin Hood Adventures is an extension of the Rebellion Gallery in the castle in which Midlands city?

2 In which US state did Disneyland open in 1955?

3 Which French company is the largest tyre manufacturer by annual revenue in Europe?

4 Draculin is a natural anticoagulant glycoprotein found in the saliva of which bat, aka *Desmodus rotundus*?

5 Which king of England died without a direct heir on January 5, 1066?

6 In 2006, Anthony Payne created a sixth *Pomp and Circumstance* march from which English composer's sketches?

7 Dolph Lundgren played the Soviet boxer Ivan Drago in which 1985 film?

8 Which English painter's *Snow Storm — Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* was first exhibited in 1842?

9 Produced by Lucas Bols, the Dutch liqueur Gold Strike is flavoured primarily with which spice?

10 What is the only body of water in the Lake District with "lake" in its official name?

11 *The Balkan Trilogy* and *The Levant Trilogy* form which 1960-80 series of novels by Olivia Manning?

12 Formerly named Port Natal, what is the busiest port city in sub-Saharan Africa?

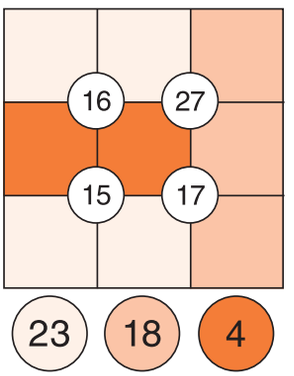
13 Classically trained as a pianist, which British drum and bass DJ founded Good Looking Records in 1991?

14 Which EFL League Two football club is nicknamed "the Minstermen"?

15 Which English comedian is pictured?

Answers on page 15

Sakuro
No 4812



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

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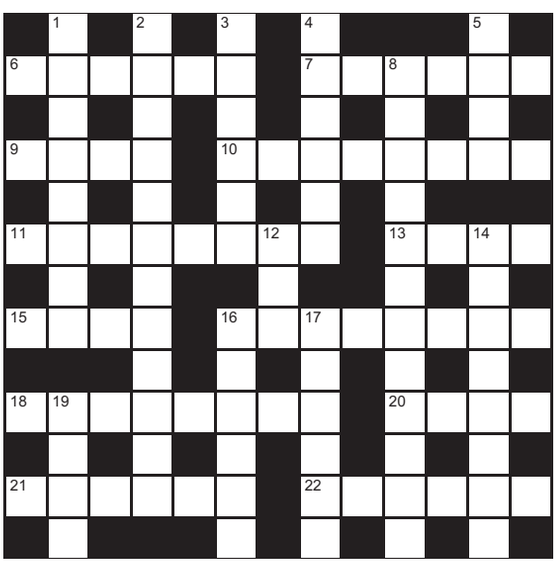
The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3372 by Jalna



Across
6 Colour of old stove (6)
7 Rubbish tee shot heading for lake (6)
9 Single river heading west in US city (4)
10 Dreary, accomplished performers (8)
11 Total struggle to cross line (8)
13 Shelter made of some fine sticks? (4)
15 Beloved person each doctor nurses (4)
16 Impressive and popular, as many churches are (8)
18 Weakness not hard to detect (4,4)
20 Excessively large plane, for example (4)
21 Lodger deprived of a bed (6)
22 Leguminous plant close to coastal inlet flourished (6)

Down
1 Horrible, liquid food almost finished by a few (8)
2 New indoor carpet is included (12)
3 Calm sales agent boasted from time to time (6)
4 Stick publicity material in this place (6)
5 Result of food fight in military dining hall? (4)
8 Non-scientist weirdly playing fast and loose (12)
12 Characters winding up arrogant people on X (3)
14 Hurry and deal with creepy-crawly? (4,2,2)
16 Bestow one politician with sculpture, perhaps (6)
17 Make your home somewhere in the Yorkshire Dales (6)
19 Leaders of one band offended every music producer (4)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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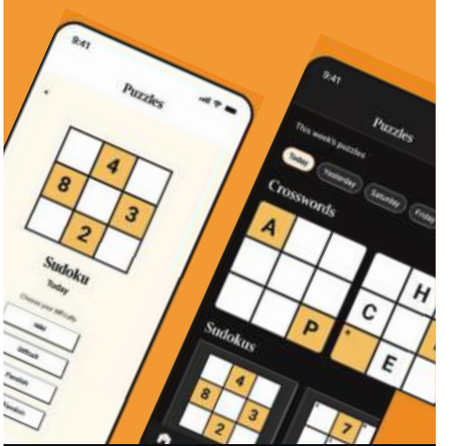

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